



A HISTORY OF INDIAN LITERATURE✓

BY

M. WINTERNITZ, Ph. D.

PROFESSOR OF INDOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY AT THE GERMAN
UNIVERSITY OF PRAGUE (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

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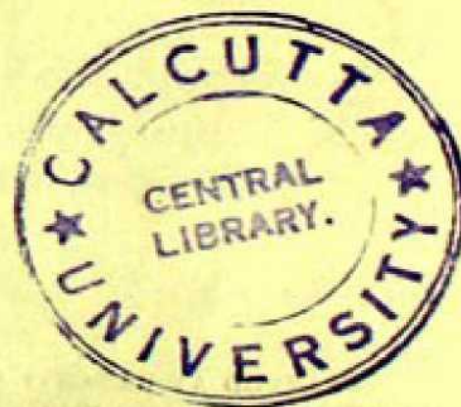
EPICS AND PURĀṆAS

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SECTION II

THE POPULAR EPICS AND THE PURĀNAS

THE BEGINNINGS OF EPIC POETRY IN INDIA

We have already seen the first traces of epic poetry in India in the Vedic literature—in the dialogue-hymns of the *R̥gveda* as well as in the *Ākhyānas*, *Itihāsas* and *Purānas* of the *Brāhmaṇas*.¹ Moreover, we know from the *Brāhmaṇas* and the ritual-literature, that the recital of such narrative poems formed a part of the religious ceremonies at the sacrificial and domestic festivals.

Thus the daily recitation of legends of gods and heroes belonged to the preliminary celebration, which lasted a whole year, of the great horse-sacrifice. In a regular succession which repeated itself every ten days, stories of certain gods and heroes were related; and also two lute-players, a Brahman and a warrior, were present, who, in verses of their own composition (*gāthās*), glorified the generosity and the warlike deeds, respectively, of the prince who was celebrating the sacrifice. The lute-players, who sang to the accompaniment of the lute the praises of a real king or of Soma as the king of the Brahmins, had also to be present at the ceremony of parting the hair, which was performed on the expectant mother in the fourth month of pregnancy, with a sacrifice for the prosperity of the fruit of her womb. After a funeral, too, it was an old custom, to whose existence the poet Bāṇa still testifies in the 7th century A.D., for the mourners to sit down in a shady place outside the house and to be diverted and consoled by the recitation of old *Itihāsas* or *Purānas*. And when, after a death or some other heavy loss, the fire of the hearth had been carried out of the house in order to avert

¹ *Of.* above pp. 88 ff., 181 ff., 197. The Indians are not consistent in their use of the expressions *ākhyāna*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*, for they sometimes use them as synonyms, but at other times to mean various kinds of narratives. The epic *Mahābhārata* in the Introduction, is called alternately *itihāsa*, *purāṇa* and *ākhyāna*. On these terms, cf. also Emil Sieg, *Die Sagnstoffe des R̥gveda und die indische Itihāsa-tradition*, I, Stuttgart, 1902, Introduction.

further misfortune, and a new fire kindled in the house by means of the two churning-sticks, then the members of the family, keeping the fire alive far into the silent night, sat listening to the tales of people who had reached a green old age, and Itihāsas and Purāṇas auspicious for the future.¹

There were not only single ballads (*Ākhyānas*, *Itihāsas*) but also cycles of ballads. At least *one* cycle of this kind has come down to us in the *Suparṇākhyāna*, also called *Suparṇādhyāya* or *Suparṇa*.² This is an apocryphal work belonging to the later Vedic literature, the author trying his utmost to imitate the hymns of the *R̥gveda* in language, accentuation and external form, so that his work should appear to belong to the *R̥gveda*. The date of this work is quite uncertain, but on metrical grounds we may place it approximately in the period of the metrical Upaniṣads, such as the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*.³ It is a cycle of ballads dealing with the legend of Kadrū, the snake-mother, and Vinatā, the bird-mother, and the enmity between Garuḍa and the snakes, a legend which dates far back into Vedic times,⁴ and which appears in epic form in the Āstikaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*.

In the later Vedic texts *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa* are very frequently enumerated beside the Vedas and other branches

¹ *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, XIII, 4, 3; *Śāṅkhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra*, I, 22, 11 f.; *Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra*, I, 14, 6 f., IV, 6, 6; *Pāraskara-Gṛhyasūtra*, I, 15, 7 f.; *Āpastambīya Gṛhyasūtra* 14, 4 f. Cf. also A. Weber, *Episches im vedischen Ritual* (SBA., 1891) and H. Lüders, in ZDMG., Vol. 58 pp. 707 ff. At the Puruṣamedha, too, the recitation of Ākhyānas forms part of the ritual, s. *Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra* 16, 11.

² The text, which has come down in very bad condition, was first edited by E. Grube, Berlin, 1875 (reprinted in *Ind. Stud.*, Vol. 14); newly edited, translated into German and annotated by J. Charpentier, *Die Suparṇasage*, Uppsala, 1920, pp. 190 ff.; Cf. J. v. Negelein in GGA., 1924, pp. 65 ff., 87 ff. J. Hertel considers this work to be a dramatic poem after the style of the *Swāṅg* described by R. Temple (WZKM., 23, 1909, 273 ff.; 24, 1910, 117 ff.; *Indische Märchen*, pp. 344, 367 f.); and he has translated it into German as a drama (*Indische Märchen*, Jena 1919, pp. 344 ff.). Cf. Winternitz, *Oesterreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient*, 41, 1915., pp. 176 f., Oldenberg, *Zur Geschichte der altindischen Prosa* pp. 61 ff. and NGGW., 1919, pp. 79 ff. This *Suparṇādhyāya* has no connection with the *Suparṇa* songs belonging to the Khilas of the *R̥gveda*, which are also called 'Suparṇādhyāya' (s. above p. 52, and Scheftelowitz, ZDMG. 74, 1920, p. 203).

³ Charpentier, *loc. cit.*, pp. 196 f., J. v. Negelein *loc. cit.*, pp. 196, f. doubts the justification of Charpentier's conclusions.

⁴ Charpentier, *loc. cit.*, pp. 288 ff.; *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, III, 6, 2.

of learning ; the study of them counts as a work pleasing to the gods : in fact, the *Itihāsapurāṇa* is actually called 'the fifth Veda'.¹ They are generally mentioned immediately after the *Atharvaveda*, to which they are said to be closely related.² This has led to the conclusion that, similar to the Vedic *Samhitās*, there existed one or several collections of *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, made up of myths and legends, legends of gods and tales of demons, snake deities, old sages (*Rṣis*) and kings of ancient times. There is no proof, however, that such collections actually existed in the form of 'books' in Vedic times.³ All that we know is that there were professional storytellers (*Aitihāsikas*, *Paurāṇikas*) in very ancient times. It is certain, moreover, that as early as the time of Buddha there was in existence an inexhaustible store of prose and verse narratives—*Ākhyānas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and *Gāthās*—, forming as it were *literary public property* which was drawn upon by the Buddhists and the Jains, as well as by the epic poets.

The 'songs in praise of men' (*gāthā nārāśaṃsī*)⁴ are often mentioned beside the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, among the texts which are pleasing to the gods. These songs are connected on the one hand with the *Dānastutis* of the *R̥gveda* and the *Kuntāpa* hymns of the *Atharvaveda*, but on the other hand

¹ As *Chāndogya-Up.*, VII, 1 f. and 7. In the *Buddhist Suttanipāta*, III, 7 (*Selasutta*), *Itihāsa* is called 'the fifth' after the three Vedas and the *Vedāṅgas*. Cf. A. Weber, *loc. cit.*, and J. Dahmann, *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, Berlin, 1895, pp. 281 ff.

² According to *Chāndogya-Up.*, III, 3, 4, the magic songs of the *Atharvaveda* stand in the same relationship to the *Itihāsapurāṇa* as the hymns (*re*) to the *R̥gveda*, the prayer formulae (*yajus*) to the *Yajurveda*, and the melodies (*sāman*) to the *Sāmaveda*. According to the *Kautilya-Arthaśāstra*, p. 7, the *Atharvaveda* and the '*Itihāsaveḍa*' together with the *trayī*, 'the threefold knowledge', form the Vedas. Cf. above, p. 110, and M. Bloomfield, *SBE.*, Vol. 42, pp. xxxvi f.

³ The theory that there was a book called '*Itihāsaveḍa*' or '*Itihāsapurāṇa*' is advanced by K. F. Geldner, *Vedische Studien*, I, pp. 290 f.; E. Sieg, *Die Sagenstoffe des R̥gveda und die indische Itihāsatradition*, I, p. 33 and *ERE.*, VII, 1914, 461 ff.; J. Hertel, *WZKM.*, 23, 1909, p. 295; 24, p. 420, R. Pischel, *KG.*, 168; H. Oertel, *WZKM.*, 24, p. 121; H. Jacobi, *SBA.*, 1911, p. 969. But the very passage in *Kautilya* I, 5, p. 10, which is quoted by these scholars, proves that '*Itihāsa*' should be interpreted, not as a single work, but as a class of literary productions: for '*Veda*' only means a certain kind of learning, not a book: *Āyurveda* is 'medical science', *Gandharvaveda* is 'music', *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda*, etc., are classes of texts, and not single books. Thus '*Itihāsaveḍa*' is not any particular book, but that branch of learning which consists of legends, stories, etc.

⁴ *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, XI, 5, 6, 8; *Aśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra*, III, 3. The fact that, in these songs, panegyrics were more important than historical truth, is evident from the Vedic texts themselves, for they declare these *Gāthās* to be 'lies' (*Maitrāyaṇi-Samhitā*, I, 11, 5; *Kāṭhaka*, 14, 5).

they are the direct precursors of the actual Heroic Epic itself, for their contents are the glorious deeds of the warriors and princes. These 'songs in praise of men' probably soon developed into epic poems of considerable length, *i.e.*, *heroic songs*, and into entire *cycles* of epic songs, centring around *one* hero or *one* great event ; for the only two national epics which have come down to us, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, represent but the last remnants of a long past period of epic poetry. Long before these two epics existed as such, songs must have been sung of the great combat of nations around which the *Mahābhārata* centres, and of the deeds of *Rāma*, the hero of the *Rāmāyana*. Neither is it conceivable that the battles of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas and the adventures of *Rāma* should have been the only subjects of poetry. Many other heroes and great events in other royal houses also must have been sung. These old heroic songs, whose existence we must take for granted, have not all vanished without trace ; in remnants and fragments some of them have been preserved in our two epics.¹

The authors, reciters and preservers of this heroic poetry were the bards, usually called *Sūtas*, who lived at the courts of kings and recited or sang their songs at great feasts in order to proclaim the glory of the princes. They also went forth into battle, in order to be able to sing of the heroic deeds of the warriors from their own observations. Thus, in the *Mahābhārata* itself, it is the *Sūta* Sañjaya who describes to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra the events on the battlefield. These courtsingers formed a special caste,² in which the epic songs were transmitted from generation to generation. Epic poetry probably originated in the circle of such bards, who certainly

¹ Cf. H. Jacobi, *Über ein verlorenes Heldengedicht der Sindhu-Sauvira*, in *Mélanges* Kern. Leide, 1903, pp. 53 ff.

² According to the law-book of Manu (X, 11 and 17), the *Sūtas* are a mixed caste descended from the intermarriage of warriors with Brahman women, while the *Māgadhas*, who, as well as the *Sūtas*, are usually called singers, are said to be descended from the intermarriage of *Vaiśyas* with *Kṣatriya* women. In war, the *Sūtas* are also the charioteers of the princes. Originally, the *Māgadhas* were undoubtedly bards from the land of Magadha, and the *Sūtas*, too, were probably inhabitants of a country situated to the east of Magadha. Cf. F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, p. 16. J. J. Meyer, *Das Weib im altindischen Epos*, Leipzig, 1915, p. 62 note, compares the modern *Bhāts* of the *Rājputs* to the *Sūtas*. On the *Bhāts* and other kinds of singers in the India of to-day, cf. R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Panjāb*, Vol. I (1884), p. viii ; and A. Baines, *Ethnography* ('Grundriss', II, 5, 1912), pp. 85 ff.

were very closely related to the *warrior class*. Besides there were also travelling singers, called *Kuśilavas*, who memorised the songs and publicly sang them to the accompaniment of the lute,¹ and to them the circulation of the heroic songs among the *people* was due. Thus it is related in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though in a late, interpolated song,² how the two sons of Rāma, Kuśa and Lava, travelled about as wandering singers and recited in public assemblies the poem learned from the poet Vālmiki.

But what we know as the popular epics of the Indians, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are not the old heroic songs as those court-singers and travelling minstrels of ancient India sang them, compiled into unified poems by great poets or at least by clever collectors with some talent for poetry, but accumulations of very diverse poems of unequal value, which have arisen in the course of centuries owing to continual interpolations and alterations. Though ancient heroic songs do indeed form the nucleus of both these works, the more devotional Itihāsa literature was included in them to so great an extent, and such long poems of a religious-didactic nature were inserted, that the *Mahābhārata*, in particular, has almost completely lost the character of an epic.

WHAT IS THE MAHABHARATA ?³

It is only in a very restricted sense that we may speak of the *Mahābhārata* as an 'epic' and a 'poem'. Indeed, in a certain sense, the *Mahābhārata* is not *one* poetic production at all, but rather a *whole literature*.

¹ Cf. A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, I, p. 54 f., 65 f.
H. Jacobi, *Das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 67.

² I, 4.

³ For information on the contents of the epic, the best help is H. Jacobi, *Mahābhārata, Inhalts-Angabe, Index und Konkordanz der Kalkuttaer und Bombayer Ausgaben*, Bonn, 1903. For the problems of the *Mahābhārata* s. especially E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India, Its Character and Origin*, New York, 1901. A rich, though unfortunately not handy, collection of materials, is contained in A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata und seine Teile*. In 4 vols. Kiel, 1892-95. The value of this great work is considerably prejudiced by the untenable theories of the author upon the remodellings of the *Mahābhārata*. Untenable, too, are the opposite theories upon the origin of the epic as one work, which Joseph Dahmann has upheld in his books *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, Berlin, 1895, *Genesis des Mahābhārata*, Berlin, 1899, and *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie als Naturlehre und Erlösungslehre, nach dem Mahābhārata*, Berlin, 1902. The first of these books, however, has the great merit of having given new life



*Mahābhārata*¹ means 'the great narrative of the battle of the Bhāratas'. The *Bharatas* are already mentioned in the *Rgveda* as a warlike tribe, and in the *Brāhmaṇas* we encounter Bharata, the son of Duṣṣanta and Sakuntalā, who is regarded as the ancestor of the royal race of the Bhāratas. The home of these Bharatas or Bhāratas was in the country of the Upper Ganges and the Jumnā. Among the descendants of Bharata, a ruler named *Kuru* was specially prominent, and his descendants, the *Kauravas* (Kuruides), were so long the ruling race of the Bhāratas, that the name Kuru or Kaurava in the course of time assumed the character of a name for the tribe of the Bharatas, and their land is that *Kurukṣetra* or 'Kuru-land' with which we are already acquainted from the *Yajurveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*.² A family feud in the royal house of the Kauravas leads to a bloody battle, a truly internecine struggle in which the ancient race of the Kurus, and with it the family of the Bhāratas, is almost entirely ruined. The history of this bloody battle, which we shall probably have to regard as an historical event, though we hear of it only in the *Mahābhārata*, was told in songs, and some great poet whose name has been lost, combined these songs into an heroic poem of the great battle in the field of the Kurus. Thus, as in the *Iliad* and in the *Nibelungen-song*, the tragedy of a terrible war of annihilation forms the actual subject of the heroic poem. This old heroic poem forms the *nucleus* of the *Mahābhārata*.

to studies of the epic; it has given rise to a veritable 'Dahlmann-literature'. Cf. H. Jacobi in GGA., 1896, No. 1 and 1899, No. 11; A. Ludwig in *Sitzungsber. der kgl. böhmischen Ges. der Wiss. cl. f. Phil.*, Prague, 1896; C. H. Tawney, *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 1896, pp. 347 ff.; J. Jolly, *Ind. Ant.*, 25, 1896, 343 f. A. Barth in the *Journal des savants*, April, June and July, 1897, and RHR., t. 45, 1902, pp. 191 ff. ('Oeuvres II', 393 ff.); M. Winternitz in JRAS., 1897, pp. 713 ff. and WZKM., XIV, 1900, pp. 53 ff.; E. W. Hopkins in the *American Journal of Philosophy*, 1898, XIX, No. 1; W. Cartellieri in WZKM., 13, 1899, pp. 57 ff.; J. Kirste in *Ind. Ant.*, 31, 1902, pp. 5 ff. Among the older literature on the *Mahābhārata* (it is summarized by Holtzmann, *loc. cit.*, IV, pp. 165 ff.) the following deserve special notice: Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, 4th edit., London, 1893; Sören Sörensen, *Om Mahābhārata's stilling i den Indiske litteratur* (with a 'Summarium' in the Latin language), Copenhagen, 1893; A. Ludwig, *Über das Rāmāyaṇa und die Beziehungen desselben zum Mahābhārata* ('II Jahresbericht des Wiss. Vereins f. Volkskunde und Linguistik' in Prague, 1894). See also Hopkins, ERE., VIII, 1915, 325 ff. and H. Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata, seine Entstehung, sein Inhalt, seine Form*, Göttingen, 1922.

¹ Bhārata means 'battle of the Bharatas' (*bhārataḥ saṁgrāmaḥ*, Pāṇini IV, 2, 56). In the *Mahābhārata* itself we find *mahābhārata-yuddha* (XIV, 81, 8) 'the great Bharata battle', and *Mahābhārata-khyānam* (I, 62, 39), 'the great story of the Bharata battle' the title *Mahābhārata* being an abbreviation of the latter.

² See above p. 170.

In the course of centuries, however, an enormous mass of the most diverse poetry has collected *around this nucleus*. First numerous legends whose connection with the old heroic poem is more or less casual, legends referring to the early history of the heroes, or giving reports of all kinds of adventures of these men, without having any reference whatever to the great battle, were added to the poem. Then, too, fragments of other heroic legends and cycles of legends, which refer to various famous kings and heroes of primeval times, found their way into the poem, even though they had nothing at all to do with the song of the great Kuru battle. How much of this old bard poetry already belonged to the original poem as secondary tales (*episodes*) and how much was only added later, will probably never be determined. We have reason to believe that in ancient times many of those episodes were recited by the minstrels as independent poems.¹ In any case, our *Mahābhārata* is not only the heroic poem of the battle of the Bhāratas, but at the same time also a *repertory of the whole of the old bard poetry*.

However, it is very much more than this. We know that the literary activity of ancient India was for the most part in the hands of the priests, the Brahmans; and we have seen how they brahmanised the old popular magic songs of the *Atharvaveda*, and how they intermingled with their priestly wisdom, the philosophy of the Upaniṣads which was really foreign, even antagonistic, to the priesthood.² The more the heroic songs grew in favour and the more popular they became, the greater the anxiety of the Brahmans to take possession of this epic poetry also; and they had the art of compounding this poetry which was essentially and purely *secular* in origin, with their own *religious* poems and the whole stock-in-trade of their theological and priestly knowledge. Thus it happens that legends of gods, *mythological narratives of brahmanical origin*, and to a great extent even

¹ It seems that individual bards made a speciality of the recitation of certain poems; for Patañjali (Pāṇini IV, 2, 60) teaches the formation of words like *Yāvākrītika*, 'one who knows the story of Yavakrīta'; *Yāyātika*, 'one who knows the story of Yayāti', etc. Cf. F. Lacôte, *Essai sur Guṇāḍhya et la Bhāṭkathā*, Paris, 1908, pp. 138 f.

² See above pp. 108, and 201 ff.

didactic sections referring to brahmanical philosophy and ethics and brahmanical law, were received into the *Mahābhārata*. This priestly caste welcomed the popular epic as the very medium for the propagation of their own doctrines, and thereby for the strengthening and consolidation of their influence. It was they who inserted into the epic all the numerous myths and legends (*Itihāsas*)¹ in which wonderful feats are related of the famous seers of ancient times, the Ṛṣis, the ancestors of the Brahmans, how by dint of sacrifices and asceticism, they obtain tremendous power not only over men, but even over the gods, and how, when they are offended, their curse causes the fall of princes and great men, and even of the kings of the gods.

The *Mahābhārata* was, however, too much of a popular book, too much the property of extensive circles of the people, in particular of the warrior caste, for it ever to have become an actual brahmanical work or the property of any one Vedic school. And it was not so much the Veda-knowing and learned Brahmans who took part in the development of the *Mahābhārata*; hence the noticeably scanty knowledge of actual brahmanical theology and sacrificial science, which we find even in those parts of the epic in which brahmanical influence is unmistakable. It was the *Purohitas*, the court-priests, who like the *Sūtas* (*bards*) were in the service of the kings, and on that account came more into contact with epic poetry. It was this less learned class of priests, too, which later on furnished temple-priests at famous holy places and places of pilgrimage, mostly dedicated to the gods Viṣṇu or Śiva, and devoted itself to the literary cultivation of local myths attached to such sacred spots, and the legends woven around the gods Viṣṇu and Śiva. This, as we shall see, was done chiefly in the *Purāṇas*, but also in the *Mahābhārata*, into which crept numerous *local myths in true Purāṇa style, Viṣṇu and Śiva myths, and Purāṇa-like cosmologies, geographical lists and genealogies.*

¹ Some of these legends can still be traced in Brahmanic texts, for instance the story of Bhaṅgāsvana who was changed into a woman, in *Mahābhārata*, XIII, 12, is found in the *Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra*; s. Winternitz and Caland in WZKM., 17, 1903, 292 f.; 351 ff.

But an epic poetry seems to have been cultivated more in those regions of India where the worship of Viṣṇu as the highest deity prevailed. This accounts for the fact that, in the religious-didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata*, this god stands so prominently in the foreground, that the work at times gives the impression of a *religious book dedicated to the worship of Viṣṇu*. It is true, *Śiva-legends* and passages referring to the Śiva cult are not wanting, but they are in every case easily recognisable as later additions. They were inserted as the epic was propagated also over regions in which Śiva worship had its home.¹

But there existed yet other religious circles in India which, already in early times, showed literary activity, and tried partly even more than the Brahmans, to win over the great masses of the people. These were the ascetics, forest-hermits and mendicants, the founders of sects and monastic orders, which at the time of Buddha were already very numerous in India. These, too, had their own poetry; *legends of saints, aphorisms*, in which they preached their doctrines of renunciation and contempt of the world, of self-sacrifice and love for all beings, and also *fables, parables, fairy-tales, and moral stories*, which were intended to illustrate the philosophy and ethics of the ascetics by means of examples. This *ascetic poetry*, too, was incorporated into the *Mahābhārata* to a considerable extent.

To such an extent had the *Mahābhārata* become a compendium of narratives of all descriptions rather than an epic, that even *prose pieces*, brahmanical legends and moral tales, some entirely in prose form and others partly in verse and partly in prose, were incorporated into the epic.²

We find, then, in this the most remarkable of all literary productions, side by side and intermingled, warlike heroic songs with highly coloured descriptions of bloody battle-scenes; pious priestly poetry, with dissertations, which are

¹ Cf. H. Jacobi in GGA., 1892, pp. 629 f.

² In the Pausyaparvan (*Mahābhārata*, I, 3), in the Mārkaṇḍeya section of the Vanaparvan, and in the sectarian Nārāyaṇīya. All these are pieces which are really outside the scope of the epic proper. I, therefore, cannot agree at all with Oldenberg (*Zur Geschichte der altindischen Prosa*, pp. 65 ff.; *Das Mahabharata*, pp. 21 ff.) in seeing an earlier stage of the epic in these very pieces. Cf. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 266 ff.; Winternitz, DLZ., 1919, No. 44.

often tedious enough, upon philosophy, religion and law ; and mild ascetic poetry full of edifying wisdom and full of over-flowing love towards man and beast.

Therefore the Indians themselves regard the *Mahābhārata*, though always as an epic, as a work of poetic art (*kāvya*), but also at the same time as a manual (*śāstra*) of morality, law and philosophy, supported by the oldest tradition (*smṛti*) and hence furnished with incontestible authority ; and since more than 1,500 years it has served the Indians as much for entertainment as for instruction and edification.

At least 1,500 years ago,¹ this *Mahābhārata* was already just as we possess it to-day in our manuscripts and editions—or at least very similar—one work which was of about the same extent as our epic of to-day. Like the latter, it already contained a long introduction with a framework, a story of the legendary origin of the poem and a glorification of it as a text-book of religion and morals ; it was divided into eighteen books called *Parvans*, to which a nineteenth book *Harivaṃśa* had already been added as a 'supplement' (*khila*) ; and it attained the extent of about 100,000 verses (*ślokas*). And up to the present day this gigantic work, in spite of all the diverse elements of which it consists, is regarded by the Indians as a unified work, complete in itself,² whose author is the most venerable Ṛṣi *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana*, also called *Vyāsa*. This same Ṛṣi is also said to be the compiler of the four Vedas³ and the author of the *Purāṇas*. According to the legend, he was not only a contemporary, but also a close relative of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*, and occasionally also appears in the action of the poem. His history is told us in great detail in the *Mahābhārata*.

He is the son of a famous ascetic, the Ṛṣi *Parāśara*. This great saint one day catches sight of *Satyavatī*, who came into the world in a fish and was brought up by fisherfolk, and is so charmed with her beauty that he desires her love. But she will

¹ See, further on the chapter on the age and history of the *Mahābhārata*.

² Therefore, too, it is called a *saṃhitā*, i.e., 'a (complete) compilation', 'a connected text', thus *Mahābhārata*, I, 1, 21.

³ Hence his name *Vyāsa* or *Vedavyāsa*, i.e., 'classifier', 'classifier of the Veda'. This is the explanation of the name given in the *Mahābhārata* itself (I, 63, 88 : *Vivṛṇāsa vedān yasmāt sa tasmād Vyāsa iti smṛtaḥ*, of. I, 60, 5 ; 105, 13).



yield to him only on the condition that, after she has borne him a son, she may regain her maidenhood. The great saint grants her this wish, and also the wish that she may lose her fish-odour and may diffuse a wonderful perfume. Immediately after he has co-habited with her, she gives birth to a son, on an island in the Jumna, who is named Dvaipāyana, 'the island-born'. The boy grows up and soon gives himself up to asceticism. When taking leave of his mother, he tells her that he will appear immediately at any time she, needing him, thinks of him. Satyavati, however, once more a virgin, later on became the wife of the Kuru king, Śāntanu, and bore the later two sons, Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. After the death of Śāntanu and Chitrāṅgada, Vicitravīrya was appointed heir. He died young and childless, but left two wives. In order that the race may not die out, Satyavati decides to call her illegitimate son Dvaipāyana, so that, according to the legal custom of the Levirate, he may beget descendants by his sisters-in-law. Now although this Dvaipāyana is a great ascetic and saint, yet he is an extremely ugly man with bristly hair and beard and darkly rolling eyes, dark in complexion (hence probably his name Kṛṣṇa, 'the black one') and an evil smell emanates from him. Therefore, when he approaches the one princess she cannot bear the sight of him, and closes her eyes : the consequence of this is that her son is born blind. He later became king *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*. The saint then approaches the second lady, and she grows pale at sight of him. As the result of this she gives birth to a son who is pale, and is therefore called *Pāṇḍu*, 'the pale one'. He is the father of the five principal heroes of the epic. Once again Dvaipāyana is to approach the first woman ; but grown wiser, she sends her maid to the saint, who notices nothing of the substitution, and with the maid he begets *Vidura*, to whom in the epic is allotted the part of a wise and well-wishing friend of Dhṛtarāṣṭra as well as of the sons of Pāṇḍu.¹

This saint, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana *Vyāsa*, whom legend has made into a kind of grandfather² of the heroes of the epic, is

¹ *Mahābhārata*, I, 63 ; 100 ff.

² According to the law of the Levirate, Vyāsa is only the progenitor, not the



regarded by the Indians, up to the present day, as the author of the whole *Mahābhārata*. Only after his three 'sons' had died, so says the introduction to the *Mahābhārata*,¹ did Vyāsa publish among the people the poem composed by him. He imparted it to his pupil *Vaiśampāyana*, and the latter recited the whole poem in the intervals of the great snake-sacrifice of King Janamejaya. On this occasion it was heard by the Sūta Ugrasravas, the son of Lomaharṣana; and our *Mahābhārata* commences with the Rṣis, who are assembled at the twelve-yearly sacrifice of Śaunaka in the Naimiṣa forest, entreating the Sūta Ugrasravas to tell them the story of the *Mahābhārata* as he has heard it from *Vaiśampāyana*. The Sūta declares himself willing, and tells the story of the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya, before proceeding to the repetition of the narrative of *Vaiśampāyana*.

The fact that the *Mahābhārata* consists almost entirely of *speeches* is certainly a trait of antiquity.² Ugrasravas is the reciter of the outline story, and in the poem itself *Vaiśampāyana* is the speaker. Within the narrative of *Vaiśampāyana* innumerable inserted tales are put in the mouth of various persons, this insertion of stories within stories being a very popular device in Indian literature. In most cases the narratives, as well as the speeches of the persons appearing, have no introduction but the prose formulae: 'Vaiśampāyana spake', 'Yudhiṣṭhira spake', 'Draupadī spake', and so on.

Fantastic as is all the information imparted to us in the introduction to the *Mahābhārata* about its supposed author, yet we find a few noteworthy statements in it. Thus we are told that the Rṣi Vyāsa narrated his work in a short summary as well as in detailed presentation; further, that different reciters begin the poem at three different places, and that its length was not always the same. Ugrasravas says that he

father, of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. The deceased husband of the two widows is regarded as their father.

¹ 1, 1, 95. ff.

² "We may observe in the *Iliad*, too, that the old epics all contain very much dialogue; only in the later epics does this dramatic element recede further into the background.....But the epic poem only reaches completion when, in addition to the speeches, the outline of the narrative, too, is composed in metrical form. The final stage is the withdrawal of the speeches, and the narration of events only in the form of verse." Ernst Windisch, *Māra und Buddha* ('Abhandl. der philolog.—histor. Klasse der K.

knows the poem as consisting of 8,800 verses, while Vyāsa declares that he composed the *Samhitā* of the *Bhārata* poem in 24,000 verses, 'and without the secondary stories the *Bhārata* is recited in this length by the experts'. Immediately afterwards it is said, rather fantastically, that Vyāsa also composed an epic of 60 hundred thousand verses, *viz.*, 30 hundred thousand for the gods, 15 for the fathers, 14 for the Gandharvas and *one* hundred thousand for men.¹ Of course this only hints at the present extent of the *Mahābhārata*, which has also acquired for it the designation *śatasāhasrī samhitā*, 'collection of one hundred thousand verses'. One sees from these statements that the Indians themselves, in spite of their firm belief in the unity of the work, have at least retained a recollection of the fact that the *Mahābhārata* only gradually grew, from an originally smaller poem, to its present extent.

What the *Mahābhārata* means to the Indians, the introduction to the work tells us in the most² extravagant fashion. It is there said, for example :

"As butter excels among curds, as the Brahman excels among Aryans, as the *Āraṇyakas* among the Vedas, the drink of immortality among medicines, the ocean among all waters, and the cow among four-footed beasts, even so the *Mahābhārata* is the best of all narrative works (*Itihāsas*)."

"Whosoever has once heard this story, can no longer take pleasure in any other story though it be well worth hearing ; just as he who has heard the song of the kokila³ can take no pleasure in the harsh voice of the crow."

"The thoughts of the poets arise from this most excellent of all narrative works, of the three realms of the universe of the five elements."

"Whosoever presents a veda-knowing and deeply learned Brahman with a hundred cows with gilded horns, and he who hears daily the sacred stories of the *Bhārata* poem—these two acquire equal (religious) merit."

"Verily this narrative work is a song of victory : a king who desires victory, should hear it, and he will conquer the earth and triumph over his enemies."

"This is a sacred manual of morals (*dharma*); it is the best manual
sacchischen Ges. der Wiss., Leipzig, 1895), pp. 222 ff. The *Mahābhārata* is still a long way from that 'final stage'.

¹ *Mahābhārata*, I, 1, 51 ff. ; 81 ; 101 ff.

² The Kokila, the Indian cuckoo, is to Indian poets what the nightingale is to our poets.



of practical life (*artha*), and Vyāsa, of boundless wisdom, recited it also as a manual of salvation (*mokṣa*)."¹

"All sins, whether of thought, word or deed, depart immediately from the man who hears this poem."

"The sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, rising daily (to perform his devotional and ascetic exercises) composed this marvellous story, the *Mahābhārata*, in three years. What we find in this book relating to morals, relating to practical life, relating to sensual pleasure and relating to salvation,² can be found elsewhere ; but what is not written therein, can be found nowhere else in the world."³

For us, however, who do not look upon the *Mahābhārata* with the eyes of believing Hindus, but as critical historians of literature it is everything but a work of art ; and in any case we cannot regard it as the work of *one* author, or even of a clever collector and compiler. The *Mahābhārata* as a whole is a literary monster. Never has the hand of an artist attempted the well-nigh impossible task of combining the conflicting elements into one unified poem. It is only unpoetical theologians and commentators and clumsy copyists who have succeeded in conglomerating into a heterogeneous mass parts which are actually incompatible, and which date from different centuries. But in this jungle of poetry, which scholarship has only just begun to clear, there shoots forth much true and genuine poetry, hidden by the wild undergrowth. Out of the unshapely mass shine out the most precious blossoms of immortal poetic art and profound wisdom. The very fact that the *Mahābhārata* represents a whole literature rather than one single and unified work, and contains so many and so multifarious things, makes it more suited than any other book, to afford us an insight into the deepest depths of the soul of the Indian people.

This may be shown by the following survey of the contents of the *Mahābhārata* and its various component parts.³

¹ *Dharma*, 'law and custom' or 'morality'; *artha* 'utility', 'advantages', 'practical life' and *kāma*, 'sensual gratification' are the three aims of life, to a certain extent the be-all and end-all of human existence, according to Indian ethics. The final aim of all striving, however, is *mokṣa*, 'deliverance' to which the various sects and philosophical systems indicate different paths.

² I, 1, 261 f. ; 2, 382 f., 393 ; 62, 20 f., 23, 25, 52 f. To the last verse compare the Bengali saying : "Whatever is not in the *Mahābhārata* is not to be found in Bharatavarṣa" (i.e., in India).

³ The whole of the *Mahābhārata* has been translated into English prose by Kisari Mohan Ganguli and published by Protap Chandra Roy (Calcutta, 1884-1896), and by

THE PRINCIPAL NARRATIVE OF THE MAHABHARATA

Years ago Adolf Holtzmann (Senior) undertook the bold endeavour "to open up for the first time for German poetry lovers, the essence of the *Mahābhārata*, the old Indian national epic itself."¹ He started from the undoubtedly correct point of view that the *Mahābhārata* is not 'the Indian epic', but that rather only "the remains, the ruins of the ancient Indian heroic songs....., after much retouching, extension, and disfigurement, are contained in the *Mahābhārata*." But with enviable self-confidence he believed himself to be endowed with the ability to reconstruct the *ancient original* heroic poem from these retouched and disfigured 'ruins'. He thought that by means of omissions, abridgments, and *alterations*, he had created in German verse an Indian heroic poem, which gave a better idea of the actual *Mahābhārata* as sung by the ancient Indian bards, than a literal translation of the existing original text would probably give. Now Holtzmann, with ingenious insight and deep poetic feeling, certainly often hit upon the right thing, but then he departed so arbitrarily from the Sanskrit text, that his work can only be regarded as a very free recast of the ancient *Mahābhārata*, but in no case as a faithful representation of it. In fact Holtzmann attempted an impossible task. Every endeavour *to reconstruct* 'the

Manmatha Nath Dutt (Calcutta, 1895-1905). A fine poetical rendering, partly in metrical translations, partly in prose extracts, has been given by Ramesh Dutt in his *Mahābhārata, the Epic of Ancient India condensed into English Verse*, London, 1899. Extracts from the *Mahābhārata* will also be found in John Muir's *Original Sanskrit Texts* (1858-1872), and *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers* (London, 1879), and in Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, 4th ed., London, 1893. A Summary of the 18 Parvans has been given by Monier Williams, *Indian Epic Poetry*, London, 1863; an outline of the story and extracts by J. C. Oman, *The Great Indian Epics*, London, 1899, pp. 93 ff. Books I-X have been translated into French by H. Fauche, Paris, 1863-1870, a collection of larger extracts by Ph. E. Foucaux, *Le Mahābhārata, onze épisodes tirés de ce poème épique*, Paris, 1862. Several episodes have been translated into Italian by P. E. Pavolini, 1902, and into German by F. Bopp (Berlin, 1824), by the poet Friedrich Rückert (s. R. Boxberger, *Rückert-Studien*, 1878, pp. 84-122 and *Rückert-Nachlese* I, 270; II, 315 ff.), by A. Holtzmann, *Indische Sagen*, 1845-1847 (new edition by M. Winternitz, Jena, 1912 and 1921), by J. Hertel, *Indische Märchen*, Jena, 1919, No. 10-14, and by W. Porzig in the series *Indische Erzähler* (Vols. 12 and 15, Leipzig, 1923, 1924). The philosophical texts of the *Mahābhārata* have been translated into German by O. Strauss and P. Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhāratam: Sanatsujātapaṇan, Bhagavadgītā, Mokshadharma, Anugītā*, Leipzig, 1906.

¹ *Indische Sagen*, Part 2; *Die Kuruṅge*, Karlsruhe, 1846.

ancient Indian national epic itself' in its original shape will always be attended by so great an element of arbitrariness, that it can only have a purely subjective value.

On the other hand, it is comparatively easy to extract a *kernel* from the enormous mass of songs of the *Mahābhārata*, namely, *the narrative of the battle of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas*, which in any case formed the subject of the actual epic. This shall be done in the following, necessarily short outline. We trace the story of the great fight, taking into consideration also, as far as possible, the important secondary stories referring to the principal heroes. In this we shall not digress into doubtful hypotheses upon the 'original' epic, but faithfully follow *the Mahābhārata text now available to us, leaving aside, for the present, everything which has no reference to the principal narrative.*

The Descent of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas

In the land of the Bharatas there once ruled a king of the house of the Kurus, Śāntanu by name. By the goddess Gaṅgā¹ who had become a mortal woman, this king had a son called *Bhīṣma*, whom he had appointed as his successor to the throne. One day, when the latter had already grown up into a superb hero endowed with all warlike virtues, Śāntanu met the beautiful fisher girl Satyavatī, fell in love with her and desired her as a wife. Her father, the king of the fisherfolk, would, however, only give her to him on condition that the son born by his daughter should inherit the throne. But Śāntanu would not consent to this, though he found it difficult to give up his beloved. Now Bhīṣma soon noticed how depressed his father was, and when he had learned the cause of this depression, he himself went to the king of the fishermen to woo Satyavatī on his father's behalf. He not only announces his intention to renounce his right to the throne, but takes a vow of chastity, so as to make it impossible for any son of his to claim the throne, whereupon the fisherman gladly gives him his daughter. So Śāntanu marries Satyavatī and has two sons by her, *Citrāṅgada* and *Vicitravīrya*. Soon after this, Śāntanu died and young Citrāṅgada was killed in battle by a Gandharva : then Bhīṣma, as the senior of the family, annointed Vicitravīrya as king. The latter, however, died young and without issue, though he had two wives. In order that the race may not die out, Satyavatī begs Bhīṣma to beget descendants by the surviving widows of Vicitravīrya, in accordance

¹ Goddess of the River Ganges.

with the ancient usage of the Levirate. But Bhīṣma, mindful of his vow of chastity, declares that though the sun may give up its brilliancy, the fire its heat, the moon may give up the coolness of its rays, the god Indra his bravery, and the god Dharma¹ his justice, he could never break his promise. Then Satyawatī remembers her illegitimate son *Vyāsa*, and with Bhīṣma's consent invites him to see to the propagation of the race. And as we have already seen,² the saint Vyāsa, begets *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, *Pāṇḍu* and *Vidura*. As Dhṛtarāṣṭra was born blind, the younger brother Pāṇḍu became king. Dhṛtarāṣṭra married *Gāndhārī*, daughter of the king of Gāndhāra, and she bore him a hundred sons, the eldest of whom was named *Duryodhana*. Pāṇḍu had two wives, *Pṛthā* or *Kuntī*, daughter of a king of the Yādavas, and *Mādrī*, sister of *Śalya*, king of the Madras. Kuntī bore him three sons : *Yudhiṣṭhira*, the eldest, *Arjuna* and *Bhīma*, who was born on the same day as Duryodhana, whilst Mādrī gave birth to the twins *Nakula* and *Sahadeva*.

Here the epic relates the following very fantastic story (which could scarcely have belonged to the old poem), according to which these five principal heroes of the epic are supposed to have been begotten not *by*, but *on behalf* of Pāṇḍu. Pāṇḍu killed a pair of antelopes at the time of copulation. In reality, however, it was a ṛṣi who had assumed the form of an antelope in order to enjoy love. This ṛṣi now pronounces a curse that Pāṇḍu shall die during the enjoyment of love. Pāṇḍu therefore determines to lead the life of an ascetic, and to renounce sexual pleasures. In order to provide descendants, however, Kuntī invokes the gods to beget children with her. Dharma, the god of justice, begets Yudhiṣṭhira with her, Vāyu, the god of the wind, begets strong Bhīma and Indra, the king of the gods, begets Arjuna. At Kuntī's request, the two Aśvins cohabit with Mādrī, and beget the twins Nakula and Sahadeva with her.

The Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas at the Court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

When Pāṇḍu died soon afterwards, blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra assumed the reins of government. The five sons of Pāṇḍu accompanied their mother Kuntī—Pāṇḍu's second wife Mādrī had thrown herself on to his funeral pyre—to the court of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra at Hastināpura, where they were educated with the princes, their cousins.

Even in their juvenile games, the sons of Pāṇḍu excelled over those of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, arousing the jealousy of the latter. Bhīma, in particular, evinced great exuberance of spirits and gave many an exhibition of unruly strength which were most displeasing to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's children. For instance, if the children climbed a tree, he would shake it so that his cousins tumbled down together with their fruits. For this reason

¹ The god of death, and at the same time the god of justice.

² See above, pp. 282 f.

Duryodhana hated Bhīma intensely, and made several attempts on his life without however being able to harm him. The boys grew up, and two famous Brahmans, skilled in the use of weapons, *Kṛpa* and *Droṇa*, were engaged as their tutors. There were among their pupils besides the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and of Pāṇḍu, also Aśvatthāman, one of Droṇa's sons, and *Karṇa*, son of a Sūta or charioteer. Duryodhana and Bhīma soon became Droṇa's best pupils with the clubs, Aśvatthāman in magic arts, Nakula and Sahadeva in sword exercises, and Yudhiṣṭhira in chariot fighting. But Arjuna was not only the best archer, but excelled all the others in every respect. For this reason the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra were extremely jealous of him.

When the princes had completed their studies, Droṇa organised a tournament at which his pupils were to show their skill. It is a brilliant and festive assembly, the king, the queens and numerous heroes are present. Bhīma and Duryodhana give a performance of club-fighting which threatens to become so deadly earnest that the combatants have to be separated. Arjuna is universally praised for his skill in archery. But Karṇa also enters the ring, and executes the same feats as Arjuna, which greatly angers the latter, whilst Duryodhana joyfully embraces Karṇa and swears eternal friendship. Karṇa challenges Arjuna to a duel, but as the descendant of a charioteer he is laughed to scorn by the Pāṇḍavas.

Yudhiṣṭhira becomes Heir to the Throne. Conspiracy against him and his brothers (The Lac House)

After a year had elapsed, Dhṛtarāṣṭra appointed as heir to the throne, Yudhiṣṭhira, the first-born of the Kuru family, who had distinguished himself by his bravery as well as by all other virtues. The other Pāṇḍavas perfected themselves still further in arms, and even went forth on victorious campaigns of conquest off their own bat. When Dhṛtarāṣṭra learned of these exploits of the Pāṇḍavas who were growing mightier and mightier, he felt some anxiety as to the future of his own line. Therefore when Duryodhana, his younger brother *Duśśāsana*, his friend Karṇa and his maternal uncle *Śakuni* concerted a plot against the Pāṇḍavas, they found a willing supporter in the aged king. They persuaded Dhṛtarāṣṭra to remove the Pāṇḍavas to Vāraṇāvata on some pretext or other. At Vāraṇāvata Duryodhana engaged a skilful builder to construct a house of lac and of other highly inflammable materials, in which the Pāṇḍavas were to live. At night when they would all be asleep, the house was to be set on fire, so that the Pāṇḍavas would meet their doom. But Vidura tells Yudhiṣṭhira privately of the treacherous plan and for this communication he makes use of a Mleccha language, *i.e.*, the language of a non-Indian tribe, which was not understood by the others. Now to avoid arousing suspicion, as they feared that Duryodhana would otherwise have

them killed in some other fashion by assassins, they pretend to fall in with the plan, journey to Vāraṇāvata and occupy the lac house. However, they flee into the forest by a subterranean passage which they had previously had dug, after setting fire to the house, in which, in addition to the builder, there is only a drunken low-caste woman lying asleep with her five sons. While everyone believes that the Pāṇḍavas have been burned with their mother Kuntī, and the funeral ceremonies are being performed at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court, the five brothers are wandering about with their mother in the forest on the other side of the Ganges. At dead of night they are in the midst of dense jungle, weary, hungry and thirsty. Kuntī complains of thirst, and Bhīma conducts his mother and four brothers to a banyan tree where they are to rest while he is seeking water. Following the water-birds, he comes to a lake, where he bathes and drinks and dips his upper garments into the water, so as to take water to the others. He hastens back, to find all his people asleep under the tree. At the sight of his mother and brothers lying asleep thus, he bemoans their sad fate in bitter words.

Hiḍimba, the Giant, and his Sister

Near this banyan tree there lurks a horrible, man-eating giant, the *Rākṣasa Hiḍimba*. He smells human flesh, and from a high tree sees the sleeping forms. His mouth waters for the delicacy which has so long been denied to him, and he asks his sister, the giantess Hiḍimbā, to go and see what manner of people they be; they would then enjoy a feast of fresh human flesh and blood together, and dance and sing merrily afterwards. The giantess approaches them, but no sooner does she set eyes on Bhīma than she is seized by violent love for the strong young hero. She therefore transforms herself into a beautiful human woman and steps smilingly towards Bhīma, tells him that this forest is haunted by a man-eating Rākṣasa, her brother, who has sent her here, but that she loves Bhīma and desires no other man but him as her lord, that he may take delight in her, and that she will rescue him. Bhīma replies that it would not enter his head to yield to passion, and to leave his mother and brothers in the lurch. Hiḍimbā answers that he may awaken his relatives by all means, and she will save them all. Bhīma retorts, however, that he would not dream of awakening his mother and brothers from their sweet slumber: Rākṣasas, Yakṣas (elves), Gandharvas and such-like riff-raff do not alarm him in the least, and he will find a way of dealing with the man-eater himself. At this juncture the giant Hiḍimba, thinking that his sister is too long away, appears in person, and would slay the love-sick Hiḍimbā in his anger. But Bhīma confronts him and challenges him to fight. After a terrible conflict, during which the brothers awake, Bhīma slays the giant. When he is about to despatch Hiḍimbā likewise, Yudhiṣṭhira



exhorts him not to slay a woman. At her earnest entreaties, he at last agrees to be united to her until a son is born to her. Yudhiṣṭhira arranges that Bhīma may stay with the giantess all day, but that he must always return before sunset. So Hiḍimbā flies through the air with Bhīma to the pleasant hill-tops, where they give themselves up to the pleasures of love, until she conceives, and bears a son, who grows into a mighty Rākṣasa. They call him *Ghaṭotkaca*, and later on, in the great fight, he does good service to the Pāṇḍavas.

The Giant Baka and the Brahman Family

Disguised as ascetics, the Pāṇḍavas now wander from forest to forest, experiencing many an adventure, and come at last to a city Ekacakrā where, without being recognised, they stay at a Brahman's house. During the day they beg for their food and in the evening they bring it home, where Kuntī divides all the food into two halves, the one for Bhīma, and the other for all the rest. One day Kuntī is alone at home with Bhīma. Loud groans and lamentations are heard proceeding from the apartments of the Brahman whose hospitality they are enjoying. First of all they hear the Brahman give vent to bitter lamentations over the lot of humanity in general, and declare that it would be best for him to perish together with his family, for he would never have the heart to sacrifice his faithful wife, his beloved daughter or his dear little son, and yet on the other hand, were he to die alone, he would be leaving his dear ones to sure distress. Then the Brahman's wife begins to speak, and says that he must live on, so as to provide for his children and to preserve the race: she herself, having borne him a son and a daughter, has fulfilled the purpose of her life, and can die in peace. Were he to die, she could never nourish and protect her two children single-handed; she would be able neither to protect her daughter from unworthy men nor to give her son an education worthy of a Brahman. Whereas he could take a second wife, she herself, as a widow, would lead but a pitiable existence. "As birds swoop greedily down upon a piece of flesh that is cast away, thus do men abuse a woman who is bereaved of her husband." Therefore she will sacrifice her life. The daughter, who has listened to what her parents have said, now has her say, and seeks to prove that for her alone is it fitting to die for the family. "Is it not said: A son is as one's own self, a wife is a friend, but a daughter is misery. Rid thyself of this misery, therefore, and let me fulfil my duty." While these three converse in this fashion, and finally burst into tears, the little son, his eyes wide open, approaches each one individually, and says, smiling, in his sweet, childish voice: "Do not weep, father! Do not weep, mother! Do not weep, sister!" And the little fellow gaily takes a blade of grass from the ground, saying: "I am going to kill the

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man-eating Rākṣasa with this !” And in the midst of their sore distress, their hearts were filled with joy when they heard the boy’s sweet voice. It is this moment which Kuntī, the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, chooses to enter and to enquire what it is that has gone wrong. She is then told that a man-eating Rākṣasa, the giant Baka, lurks in the vicinity of the city, and that at certain intervals the inhabitants of the city are obliged to supply him with a cartload of rice, two buffaloes and a human being by way of tribute. The families are chosen in rotation, and it is now the turn of the family in question. Then Kuntī consoles the Brahman and suggests that one of her five sons shall pay the tribute to the Rākṣasa. But the Brahman will not hear of a Brahman, and a guest at that, sacrificing his life for him. Then Kuntī explains to him that her son is a great hero, which fact is not to be disclosed, and that he will surely slay the Rākṣasa. Bhīma is prepared to carry out his mother’s proposal immediately, and the next morning he drives into the forest haunted by the monster, with the cart containing the food intended for the Rākṣasa. As soon as he reaches the forest, he begins to eat the food himself (this is most humorously described), and is in no wise perturbed by the stormy approach of the giant. Even when the infuriated Rākṣasa showers blows on him with both hands, he calmly continues eating. It is not until he has eaten everything up that he prepares for the combat. They uproot the mightiest trees in the forest and hurl them at each other. A stupendous struggle then ensues, the result of which is that Bhīma breaks the giant in two across his knee. Bhīma extracts a promise from the remaining Rākṣasas, the relatives and subjects of Baka, that they will never again kill a human being, and he then returns to his brothers. There is great joy in the city, but the Pāṇḍavas preserve their incognito.

The Self-choice and Marriage of Draupadī

After a time the Pāṇḍavas decide to leave Ekacakrā and to migrate to Pāñcāla. On the road thither they hear that *Drupada*, king of the pañcalas, is about to hold a ‘self-choice’¹ for his daughter. The brothers decide to take part in the festival, and, disguised as Brahmans, they go to the residential town of Drupada, where they live unrecognised at the house of a potter, and beg for their food as Brahmans. Now Drupada had had a very stiff bow made, and had had a target set high up in the air by means

¹ *Svayamvara*, i.e., ‘bride’s self-choice’, is a form of engagement or betrothal in which the king’s daughter herself chooses her husband from amongst the assembled princes and heroes (after her father has issued a solemn invitation), placing a garland around the neck of the chosen one, whereupon the marriage takes place. While the *Svayamvara* is very frequently described in *epic poetry*, this custom is not mentioned at all in the brahmanical *law-books*, which otherwise treat the various kinds of betrothal in great detail. Cf. J. J. Meyer, *Das Weib im altindischen Epos*, pp. 60 ff.



of a mechanical contrivance, and he proclaimed that only the hero who could draw the bow and hit the mark, would be qualified to win his daughter *Kṛṣṇā* at the *Svayamvara*. Princes of all lands, among them the *Kauravas*, *Duryodhana* and his brothers and *Karṇa*, accept King *Drupada*'s invitation and assemble in the festively decorated hall in which the self-choice of a husband is to take place. Innumerable Brahmins, too, flock in as spectators, and among them are the five *Pāṇḍavas*. There are brilliant festivities for several days, and the foreign kings and the Brahmins enjoy splendid hospitality as guests. At last, on the sixteenth day, attended by the usual ceremonies, the radiant *Kṛṣṇā*, beautifully dressed and adorned, steps into the hall, holding the garland of flowers in her hand. Her brother *Dhṛṣṭadyumna* proclaims in a loud voice :

“Mark this bow, assembled monarchs, and the targets hung on high,
Through you whirling piercé discus let five glitt’ring arrows fly !
Whoso born of noble lineage, hits the far suspended aim,
Let him stand and as his guerdon *Drupad*’s beauteous

maiden claim !”¹

After this he tells his sister the names of all the kings present, beginning with *Duryodhana*. All of them are at once enamoured of the charming *Kṛṣṇā*. Each is jealous of the other, and every single individual hopes to win her. One after the other now attempts to bend the bow, but none succeed. Then *Karṇa* steps forward ; he has already bent the bow, and is prepared to hit the mark, when *Kṛṣṇā* calls out in a loud voice : “My choice shall not be a charioteer.” With a bitter laugh and a glance towards the sun, *Karṇa* throws the bow down again. In vain do the mighty kings *Śiśupāla*, *Jarāsandha* and *Śalya* strive to bend the bow. Then *Arjuna* arises from the midst of the Brahmins. Amid loud murmurs of applause from those who admire the stately youth, and amid the sounds of disapproval of those who are angry at the presumption of a Brahmin in entering the lists with warriors, he strides to the bow, bends it in the twinkling of an eye, and shoots the target down. When *Kṛṣṇā* sees the godlike youth, she hands him the garland joyfully, and followed by the princes, *Arjuna* leaves the hall.

However, when the assembled kings perceive that *Drupada* really intends to give his daughter to the Brahmin, they take it as an insult ; for in their opinion, the self-choice of a husband is for warriors, but not for Brahmins. They attempt to kill *Drupada*, but *Bhīma* and *Arjuna* hasten to his aid. *Bhīma* uproots a mighty tree, and stands there, terrible as the god of death. *Arjuna* stands beside him, with the bent bow. *Karṇa* fights with *Arjuna*, and *Śalya* with *Bhīma*. After a hard fight, *Karṇa* and *Śalya* confess themselves beaten. The kings give up the fight, and return to their homes. But the *Pāṇḍavas* go on their way

¹ Translated by Romesh Dutt, *Maha-Bharata*, p. 19.

with Kṛṣṇā, and wend their way to the potter's house, where Kuntī anxiously awaits them. Arjuna now declares in the presence of his mother and his brothers that he will not wed Kṛṣṇā, daughter of Drupada, whom he has won, for himself alone, but that, in accordance with the ancient custom of their family, she must become the common wife of all five brothers.

Among those present at the self-choice was *Kṛṣṇa*, the chieftain of a clan of the Yādavas and the cousin of the Pāṇḍavas (for Vasudeva, Kṛṣṇa's father, was Kuntī's brother). He was the only one who had recognised the Pāṇḍavas, in spite of their disguise. He therefore followed the Pāṇḍavas, accompanied by his brother *Baladeva*, visited them at the potter's house, and disclosed to them that he was their relative. This greatly rejoiced the Pāṇḍavas, but in order that they might not be recognised, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva soon took their departure.

Prince Dhṛṣṭadyumna had also secretly followed the Pāṇḍavas in order to find out who the hero who had won his sister for his consort, really was. He conceals himself in the potter's house, and observes how the brothers return home and respectfully greet their mother, how Kuntī instructs Draupadī¹ regarding the preparation and distribution of the food, how after the evening meal they betake themselves to rest, the youngest brother spreading a mattress of kuśa grass whereon the five brothers stretch themselves in turn, each one on his antelope-skin, whilst their mother and Draupadī put up their beds at their head and foot respectively : and he hears how the brothers still regale one another with all kinds of conversation upon arms and warlike deeds before falling asleep. Then Dhṛṣṭadyumna hastens back to his father, to tell him that, judging from their conversation, the supposed Brahmans must be warriors, at which the king rejoices exceedingly. The next morning, Drupada invites the Pāṇḍavas to the palace, in order to celebrate his daughter's wedding with due festivity. It is only now that Yudhiṣṭhira informs him that they are the sons of Pāṇḍu, whom people had thought dead ; Drupada is much rejoiced at this, for it had always been his wish to have the brave Arjuna as a son-in-law. Just when he is about to perform the ceremonial marriage of his daughter with Arjuna, he is, however, somewhat astonished and disillusioned to learn from Yudhiṣṭhira that Kṛṣṇā must become the common wife of all five brothers. The scruples which he puts forward are, however, appeased when he learns of the ancient family custom of the Pāṇḍavas, and Draupadī is wedded before the sacred fire first to Yudhiṣṭhira as the eldest brother, and then to the other four brothers in order of age.² Kuntī blesses her daughter-in-law, and

¹ Kṛṣṇā 'the black one' is usually called Draupadī, *i.e.*, 'daughter of Draupada'.

² In this marriage to five husbands, the epic has indubitably faithfully preserved an old feature of the legend ; for polyandry, or rather group-marriage, of which the marriage of the Pāṇḍavas affords an example, though still occurring in certain regions



Kṛṣṇa sends rich and most costly wedding presents to the newly-wedded people.

The Pāṇḍavas get their Kingdom back

The report that the Pāṇḍavas are still alive and that it was Arjuna who had won Draupadī at the self-choice, is soon noised abroad. Duryodhana and his friends return sadly to Hastināpura, and they are much cast down by the Pāṇḍavas' having gained two mighty allies by their marriage, namely, Drupada and the Pañcālas, and Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas. Duryodhana is of opinion that they should be on their guard against the Pāṇḍavas, and suggests that they should get rid of them by treachery. Karna, on the other hand, is for open combat. But Bhīṣma, supported by Vidura and Droṇa, advises Dhṛtarāṣṭra to cede one-half of the kingdom to of India at the present day, was by no means attested as a legitimate form of marriage in ancient India, and is directly opposed to the brahmanical views. When Drupada says (I, 197, 27) : "The law teaches that *one* man has many wives ; but one has never heard that *one* woman has many men as her husbands", he only gives expression to the general Indian opinion. When, in spite of this, the five principal heroes of the epic have only *one* wife between them, it is a proof that this feature was so closely interwoven with the whole legend and the ancient epic, that, even at a later time, when the *Mahābhārata* acquired a more and more brahmanical character and became a religious text book, the elimination of this feature could not be dreamed of. All that was done was to try to *justify* the marriage to five husbands, by means of several clumsily inserted stories. On one occasion Vyāsa relates the silly story of a maiden who could not obtain a husband, and implored the god Śiva to procure a husband for her. Now because she had cried *five times* "Give me a husband", Śiva promises her five husbands—in a future birth. This maiden is reborn as Kṛṣṇā, Drupada's daughter, and therefore receives the five Pāṇḍavas, as husbands. A second story is not much more ingenious. The Pāṇḍavas, who live in the potter's house as begging Brahmans, come home with Draupadī, and announce to their mother that they have brought 'the alms' which they have collected while out begging. Without looking up, Kuntī says, according to her custom, 'Enjoy it all together'. Only then does she notice that 'the alms' is a woman, and is very much perturbed ; but the word of a mother may not be made untrue and therefore the five brothers must enjoy Draupadī in common. A third story, which Vyāsa related to Drupada, is the śivaitic 'Five Indra story' (pañcendropākhyānam), a most fantastic and confused account, according to which Indra, as a punishment for having offended Śiva, is reborn on earth in five parts and an incarnation of Lakṣmī or Śrī (Goddess of good fortune and beauty) is destined to be his wife. The five Pāṇḍavas are incarnations of the *one* Indra, Draupadī is an incarnation of Lakṣmī, so that Draupadī has actually only *one* husband ! There is not even an attempt made to bring these three justification stories into accord with one another or with the principal narrative. On the other hand, it is repeatedly distinctly emphasized that it was an *ancient family custom*, not indeed a general Indian custom, but a special *family usage* of the Pāṇḍavas. In Buddhist and Jain stories, Draupadī's self-choice of a husband is so described that she chooses, and Arjuna, but all the five Pāṇḍavas simultaneously. Strangely enough, even a few European scholars have tried to *interpret* and *justify* the marriage to five husbands mythologically, allegorically and symbolically, instead of accepting it as an ethnological fact. (Cf. my *Notes on the Mahābhārata*, JRAS., 1897, pp. 733 ff.).

the Pāṇḍavas and to live peaceably with them. Dhṛtarāṣṭra agrees to this proposal and cedes one-half of his kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas, and it is arranged that they shall settle in the desert of Khāṇḍavaprastha. Yudhiṣṭhira gladly accepts the offer, and, accompanied by Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas journey to Khāṇḍavaprastha, where they found as their residence the great city and fort of *Indraprastha* (near modern Delhi).

Arjuna's Banishment and Adventures

The Pāṇḍavas live happy and contented in Indraprastha with their common wife. In order to avoid any jealousy among them, they had mutually agreed (on the advice of the divine sage Nārada) that if any one of the brothers should intrude on a private interview of any other of the brothers with Draupadī, the former should go into banishment and lead a life of chastity for twelve years. Owing to this understanding they lived at peace with one another.

One day some robbers steal some cattle from a Brahman, who comes running into the palace violently reproaching the king for not protecting his subjects sufficiently. Arjuna wishes to hasten to his aid immediately. Chance will have it that the weapons are hanging in a room in which Yudhiṣṭhira happens to be together with Draupadī. Arjuna is in a dilemma. Is he to fail in his duty of a warrior towards the Brahman, and to break the rule with regard to their common wife, or is he to violate the former so as to be able to conform to the latter? He decides to enter the room and fetch the weapons; he pursues the robbers and restores the cattle to the Brahman. Then he returns home and announces to Yudhiṣṭhira that, in accordance with the agreement, he will go into banishment for twelve years. Though Yudhiṣṭhira tries to restrain him, as he had taken no offence whatsoever, Arjuna nevertheless retires to the forest, on the principle that what is right is right, whatever the circumstances.

Here he has many adventures. On one occasion he is bathing in the Ganges, and is about to come out of the water, after sacrificing to the fathers, when Ulūpī, the daughter of a Nāga king, draws him down into the kingdom of the Nāgas (snake demons). She explains to him that she has fallen in love with him, and begs him to take delight in her. Arjuna replies that he cannot do this, as he has taken the vow of chastity. But the snake virgin objects, saying that this vow can only refer to Draupadī, and that, as a matter of fact, it is his duty as a warrior to aid the unfortunate; and that if he would not grant her request, she would end her life—he must therefore save her life. Arjuna is powerless against these arguments, and 'keeping his eye on his duty', he grants beautiful Ulūpī's request and spends a night with her.

On another occasion his wanderings bring him to Citravāhana, king of Maṇipūra, and he falls in love with the king's beautiful daughter

Chitrāṅgadā. But she is a 'son-daughter',¹ and the king only gives her to him on condition that a son born of her be accounted as his (*Citravāhana's*) son. Arjuna agrees to this, and lives with her in *Maṇipura*² for three years. After she has borne a son, he takes leave of her and continues his wanderings.

After having visited various holy places and had many more adventures, he meets Kṛṣṇa and visits him in his city of *Dvārakā*, where he is received with great festivity. A few days later there was a great feast of the *Vṛṣṇis* and *Andhakas*—clans of the *Yādavas*—on the hill *Raivataka*. Noblemen and citizens go forth with music, singing and dancing, and there is great merriment. *Baladeva*, Kṛṣṇa's brother, gets drunk with his wife *Revatī*; *Ugrasena*, king of the *Vṛṣṇis*, comes with his thousand wives, and many other princes with their wives. On this occasion Arjuna sees *Subhadrā*, Kṛṣṇa's beautiful sister, and becomes enamoured of her. He asks Kṛṣṇa how he can obtain her, and the latter advises him to carry her off by force after the fashion of warriors, as a self-choice is always an uncertain affair.³ Then Arjuna sends a messenger to *Yudhiṣṭhira* to ask his permission for the abduction of *Subhadrā*. *Yudhiṣṭhira* gives his consent, and Arjuna goes forth in his chariot in full battle array, as though he were going to the chase. *Subhadrā* is taking a stroll on *Raivataka*, and just as she is about to return to *Dvārakā*, Arjuna seizes her, places her on his chariot and drives off with her in the direction of *Indraprastha*. Great excitement prevails in *Dvārakā*; the drunken *Baladeva* is furious at Arjuna's having violated the laws of hospitality. But Kṛṣṇa pacifies his relatives by telling them that Arjuna has not offended them at all. On the contrary, he had not considered the *Yādavas* so avaricious that they would sell a maiden like a head of cattle, and he had not wanted to take the chance of an uncertain self-choice, so his only course had been to carry *Subhadrā* off. There was no objection to the marriage itself, but they should recall Arjuna, and effect a reconciliation. This actually takes place, and Arjuna and *Subhadrā* are married. He stays in *Dvārakā* for another year, enjoying the society of *Subhadrā*. He spends the remainder of the twelve years at the sacred place of *Puṣkara*, after which he returns to *Indraprastha*. *Draupadī* reproaches him for his marriage with *Subhadrā*, but is appeased when *Subhadrā* offers herself to *Draupadī* as a maidservant. Thenceforth *Draupadī*, *Subhadrā* and *Kuntī* live happily together. *Subhadrā*

¹ A *putrikā* or 'son-daughter' is a daughter whose son does not belong to the husband, but to the father of the girl. For if a man has no son, he can appoint his daughter as *putrikā*, whereby a son born of her becomes the continuator of her father's race, i.e., he is bound in duty to the ancestral sacrifice and entitled to the inheritance.

² We hear no more of the vow of chastity.

³ Obviously the *Yādavas* were a rough shepherd-tribe, with whom marriage by theft was still legitimate.

bore Arjuna a son, *Abhimanyu*, who became a favourite with his father and his uncles, but Draupadī bore *one* son to each of the five Pāṇḍavas.

Yudhiṣṭhira becomes the Ruler of the World

King Yudhiṣṭhira reigned justly and piously in his kingdom, and his subjects, who loved him devotedly, lived in peace and happiness. The king's brothers, too, led a happy life. But Arjuna enjoyed a still more intimate friendship with Kṛṣṇa. Once when the two friends were conversing in the groves by the Jumnā (where they had veritable orgies with many beautiful women, and in which even Draupadī and Subhadra participated) the god Agni approached them in the form of a Brahman, and besought them to assist him in burning the Khāṇḍava forest. The fact was that the god had indigestion after eating the numerous offerings at some great sacrifice, and Brahman had told him that he must burn the Khāṇḍava forest if he wished to recover from it : but every time he had attempted to set the forest afire, the forest animals extinguish it again. Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are to prevent this, and Agni procures heavenly weapons for them for the purpose : for Arjuna the mighty bow Gāṇḍīva with two inexhaustible quivers and a splendid chariot with silvery-white horses and recognisable from afar by a monkey banner ; and for Kṛṣṇa a sure discus and an irresistible club. With these weapons they support Agni and kill all creatures which attempt to escape from the burning forest. They spare only the demon Maya, who is a great artist among the heavenly host.¹

In thankfulness at the sparing of his life, the demon Maya builds for Yudhiṣṭhira a marvellous palace with all kinds of most ingenious devices. After some time Yudhiṣṭhira, in agreement with Kṛṣṇa, decided to offer the great sacrifice for the consecration of a king (*rājasūya*). Now only a ruler of the world, a great conqueror, is entitled to offer this sacrifice. But as Jarasandha, king of Magadha, is the mightiest ruler for the time being, he must be removed. He is killed in a duel with Bhīma. After this, Arjuna, Bhīma, Sahadeva and Nakula go forth on victorious campaigns of conquest in the north, east, south and west respectively, on the strength of which Yudhiṣṭhira becomes possessed of a world-kingdom. The kings' consecration sacrifice may now be offered, and it is celebrated with great pomp. Numerous kings, including the Kauravas, are invited to it. At the close of the sacrifice, gifts of honour are distributed. At Bhīṣma's suggestion, Kṛṣṇa is to receive the first gift of honour. Śiśupāla, king of Cedi, objects to this. A quarrel ensues, ending in the death of Śiśupāla at the hands of Kṛṣṇa.

When the sacrifice is accomplished, the foreign kings take their departure. Kṛṣṇa, too, returns to his home. Only Duryodhana and his uncle

¹ Here ends the *Ādiparvan*, or First book of the *Mahābhārata*.



Śakuni stay on in the palace of the Pāṇḍavas for some time. When viewing the superb building Duryodhana meets with all kinds of mishaps. He mistakes a crystal surface for a lake, and undresses in order to bathe ; on the other hand, he mistakes an artificial pond for dry land, and has an involuntary dip, at which Bhīma and Arjuna burst out laughing loudly.¹ This scorn wounded Duryodhana very deeply, for he was already consumed with envy. It is with feelings of the deepest envy and hate that he takes leave of his cousins and returns to Hastināpura.

The Game of Dice

Duryodhana tells his tale of woe to his uncle Śakuni in bitter words. He tells him that he cannot bear the disgrace of seeing his enemies celebrating such triumphs ; and that, as he cannot see any way of getting at the Pāṇḍavas, he will put an end to his life by fire, poison or water. Then Śakuni proposes that a game of dice should be arranged, and that Yudhiṣṭhira be invited to it ; and Śakuni, who is a skilled player, is to win Yudhiṣṭhira's whole kingdom from him with ease. They repair forthwith to the aged king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, in order to obtain his consent to the plan. At first the king will have nothing to do with it, wishing at all events to consult his wise brother Vidura ; but when Duryodhana points out to him that Vidura always takes the part of the Pāṇḍavas, the feeble old king allows them to talk him over, and orders the game of dice to be held. He sends Vidura in person to Yudhiṣṭhira to invite him to the game. Vidura warns the king and does not conceal from him his fear that great mischief may arise from this game of dice. Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself entertains this fear too, but believes that he must let Fate have its course. So Vidura goes to the court of King Yudhiṣṭhira to deliver the invitation to the game of dice. The latter, too, refers to the irresistible power of Fate, and accepts the invitation, though reluctantly. Accompanied by his brothers and Draupadī and the other women of the household, he sets out for Hastināpura. In Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace the guests are greeted affably by their relatives and are received with great honours.

The next morning Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers repair to the gaming-hall, where the Kauravas are already assembled. Śakuni challenges Yudhiṣṭhira to play, the last-named stakes something—and loses. One after the other, he stakes all his treasures, all his wealth of gold and precious stones, his state chariot, his male and female slaves, elephants,

¹ Duryodhana's adventures in the marvellous palace of Yudhiṣṭhira remind us of the story of the Queen of Sheba, who mistakes a glass floor in Solomon's palace for a sheet of water, and bares her legs. Cf. Qurān, 27, 38 ; W. Hertz, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (1905), p. 427 ; Grierson, *JRAS.*, 1913, 684 f. There is also a similar story in the legend of the wonders of the new Babylon, built by Nebuchadnezzar ; s. A. Wesselofsky in *Archiv für slavische Philologie* II, 310 ff., 321.

chariots and steeds—and he loses every time. Then Vidura turns to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and advises him to sever from his son Duryodhana who bids fair to bring on the ruin of the entire family, and to forbid the continuation of the game. Duryodhana now begins to inveigh most bitterly against Vidura, calling him a traitor, a viper which the Kauravas have nourished in their bosom, for he never speaks but in the interests of their enemies. Vidura turns in vain to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Śakuni scornfully asks Yudhiṣṭhira whether he has anything more to stake. Yudhiṣṭhira is now possessed by the uncontrollable passion for gambling, and stakes all his possessions, his oxen and all his cattle, his city, his land and the whole of his kingdom—and all is lost. He stakes even the princes, and then the brothers Nakula and Sahadeva, and loses them. Incited by Śakuni, he is even led away to stake Arjuna and Bhīma, and he loses even these. Finally he stakes *himself*, and Śakuni again wins. Śakuni remarks with scorn that Yudhiṣṭhira has not done wisely in staking himself, since he still possesses a treasure which can be gambled away, namely Draupadī, the daughter of the Pañcāla king. And to the horror of all the aged people present,¹ of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and Vidura, Yudhiṣṭhira announces that he will stake beautiful Draupadī. The dice are cast amid universal excitement, and Śakuni gains yet another victory.

Laughing, Duryodhana asks Vidura to bring Draupadī along, so that she may sweep the rooms and take her place among the maidservants. Vidura admonishes him, and warns him that his behaviour will only serve to bring about the downfall of the Kauravas ; he says that, as a matter of fact, Draupadī has not become a slave at all, for Yudhiṣṭhira only staked her when he has no longer master of himself. Then Duryodhana sends a sūta as a messenger to Draupadī, to fetch her. The latter sends the messenger back to ask whether Yudhiṣṭhira gambled *himself* or *her* away first. Duryodhana sends the reply that she was to come to the gaming-hall and ask this question herself. As she refuses, and sends the messenger back each time without fulfilling his task, Duryodhana calls on his brother Duśśāsana to go and fetch her by force. Duśśāsana repairs to the women's apartments and soon drags the struggling Draupadī into the assembly by the hair ; she is unwell and therefore clad only in scanty garments. She laments bitterly that no one takes her part, not even Bhīṣma and Droṇa, and she casts a despairing glance at the Pāṇḍavas. Now the loss of their possessions and of their kingdom does not pain them so deeply as this glance of Draupadī's, filled with shame and anger. Then Bhīma can restrain himself no longer, he reproaches Yudhiṣṭhira violently for having staked Draupadī, and is about

¹ It is very noteworthy that these impartial and well-disposed men accept so calmly the fact that Yudhiṣṭhira has gambled away *his brothers and himself*, while it appears to them monstrous that he should stake their common wife.



to lay hands on him.¹ But Arjuna admonishes him : Yudhiṣṭhira must always be recognised and respected as the eldest. Now Vikarṇa, one of Duryodhana's youngest brothers, calls on those assembled to reply to Draupadī's question whether she has been gambled away by right. As they are all silent, he himself answers the question *in the negative*. Karṇa, however, retorts that the Kauravas have won *everything*, and that therefore the wife of the Pāṇḍavas also belongs to them. He adds that the Pāṇḍavas, and Draupadī too, should be stripped of their very clothes, as the Kauravas have won their clothes from them. The Pāṇḍavas take off their upper garments, while Duśśāsana, at a sign from Karṇa, proceeds to tear Draupadī's garment from her. She, however, prays to Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of the god Viṣṇu, and by his help she remains clothed, however, many times Duśśāsana seizes her draperies.² But Bhīma now pronounces the terrible oath :

"Give heed to my oath, ye warriors of the whole world, an oath such as has never before been uttered by men, and such as will never again be uttered by a man. May I never attain to the resting-place of my ancestors if I do not fulfil the words which I have spoken—If I do not tear open the breast of this evil, foolish outcast of the Bhāratas in the fight, and drink his blood !"

Horror seizes all the warriors and heroes at these fearful words. In vain does Vidura remind those present of their *duty* to decide the legal question whether Draupadī has been won by the Kauravas or not. In vain does Draupadī weep and lament, and implore her relatives to answer her question. Even the pious Bhīṣma, learned in the law, can say no more than that justice is a ticklish matter, and that might is right in this world. As Yudhiṣṭhira is a model of justice, he himself should decide. Duryodhana, too, scornfully asks Yudhiṣṭhira to give his opinion whether he considers Draupadī has been won or not. And as Yudhiṣṭhira sits there absent-minded, and makes no reply, Duryodhana goes so far as to offer the most unheard-of insult to the Pāṇḍavas : he bares his left thigh before Draupadī's very eyes. Then Bhīma utters the terrible words : "May Bhīma

¹ Bhīma says he will burn both of Yudhiṣṭhir's arms, and asks Sahadeva to bring fire for this purpose (II, 68, 6 ; 10). J. J. Meyer (*Das Weib im altindischen Epos*, p. 226) translates differently, interpreting the passage as meaning that Bhīma wishes to burn his own hands, and Meyer calls this 'a typically Indian method of revenge and branding', similar to the 'prāyopaveśa' (threat of suicide by hunger, in order to force a right). Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary (*te tava pura iti śeṣaḥ*) would confirm this interpretation. Even if the usual translation be accepted, Bhīma's threat sounds very strange.

² Not only the Southern Indian manuscripts, but also the play 'Dūtavākya' ascribed to Bhāsa, make it seem probable that this miracle of the garments is a very late interpolation ; s. Winternitz in *Festschrift Kuhn*, pp. 299 ff. Oldenberg (*Das Mahabharata*, pp. 45 ff.) makes an attempt to distinguish generally between the earlier and later parts in the present narrative of the gambling scene.

never be united to his fathers, if I do not crush this thigh of yours in the fight !”

Whilst still further speeches are being exchanged, the loud cry of a jackal and other sounds of ill omen are heard in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's house. Terrified by these, the old king Dhṛtarāṣṭra at last feels himself called upon to intervene. He blames Duryodhana in violent words. Then he pacifies Draupadī, and tells her to wish for something. She wishes for the freedom of her husband Yudhiṣṭhira. He grants her a second wish, and she chooses the liberation of the four remaining Pāṇḍavas. However, when he asks her to wish a third time, she says that she has now nothing more to wish for, as the Pāṇḍavas themselves will win all things needful, as soon as they are set free. Karṇa now begins to mock, saying that Draupadī is the boat in which the Pāṇḍavas have saved themselves from danger. Bhīma is consumed by rage, and is in doubt whether he should not slay the Kauravas on the spot. But Arjuna calms him, and Yudhiṣṭhira forbids any fighting. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, however, returns Yudhiṣṭhira his kingdom and exhorts him to let bygones be bygones. Thus they return to Indraprastha in a calmer frame of mind.

The Second Game of Dice and the Banishment of the Pāṇḍavas

No sooner have the Pāṇḍavas departed, however, than Duryodhana, Duśśāsana and Śakuni again besiege the old king, pointing out to him the danger which threatens from the Pāṇḍavas who have now been so grievously insulted, and persuade him to give his consent to a second game of dice. This time the loser is to go into banishment into the forest for twelve years, sojourn somewhere among people in the thirteenth year incognito, and is only to be allowed to return in the fourteenth year. Should he be recognised in the thirteenth year, however, he would have to go into banishment for another twelve years. In vain does Gāndhārī, the king's consort, strive to persuade him to sever himself from his wicked son Duryodhana, in order that he may not be guilty of causing the downfall of all the Kauravas. But he is deluded, and gives his consent ; and a messenger is sent out, who catches up with the Pāṇḍavas, who are still on their homeward journey. Bewildered by fate, Yudhiṣṭhira accepts the invitation to the second game of dice. They all return, the game begins afresh, and he again loses. Now they must all go into banishment for thirteen years.

Clad in antelope-skins, the Pāṇḍavas prepare to go into the forest. Duryodhana and Duśśāsana rejoice in their triumph, and joke about them, but Bhīma hurls terrible threats at them. As Duryodhana pierces their hearts with sharp words, he says, even so will he pierce Duryodhana's heart in the fight. And once again he swears to drink the blood of Duśśāsana. Arjuna promises to slay Karṇa, Sahadeva, Śakuni and Nakula, the remaining sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. But Yudhiṣṭhira takes leave

of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma and the other Kauravas, and most affectionately of all, of wise, good Vidura. Kuntī, the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, stays behind in Vidura's house, but Draupadī follows her husbands into banishment, and her farewell from her mother-in-law is touching indeed. With tearful lamentations Kuntī sees her children go forth into banishment, but, with the exception of the gentle Yudhiṣṭhira, all of them swear to have their bloody revenge on the Kauravas in the fourteenth year. Omens of evil portent, and the prophetic words of the heavenly messenger Nārada announce to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra the downfall of his race, and he feels bitter remorse for having given his consent to the game of dice and the banishment.¹

*The Twelve Years' Forest Life of the Pāṇḍavas*²

Numerous citizens of Hastināpura accompany the Pāṇḍavas into the forest, and it cost Yudhiṣṭhira some trouble to persuade them to return home. Several Brahmins stayed with him for some considerable time. In order to be able to feed them, he practised asceticism, and prayed to the sun-god, whereupon he received from the latter a copper cooking-pot which filled itself at will. He fed the Brahmins with this, and then journeyed northward to the Kāmyaka forest. Bhīma soon slew the man-eating rākṣasa Kirmīra, a brother of Baka and a friend of Hiḍimba, who haunted this forest.

In the meantime Dhṛtarāṣṭra had a consultation with Vidura. The latter advises the king to recall the Pāṇḍavas from banishment and to effect a reconciliation with them. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is angry that Vidura always takes the part of the Pāṇḍavas, and ungraciously dismisses him with words intimating that he may go where he likes. Vidura goes to the Pāṇḍavas in the Kāmyaka forest, and tells them what has happened. The aged king, however, soon repents of his violence, and sends the charioteer Sañjaya to have his brother Vidura recalled. Vidura soon returns accordingly, and there is a complete reconciliation between the two brothers.

When the friends and relatives of the Pāṇḍavas heard of their banishment, they went to them in the forest, to visit them. One of the first was, of course, Kṛṣṇa. At the time of the game of dice, he had been entangled in a war, and thus had been unable to stand by his friends. Had he been with them, he would certainly have prevented the game. When, however, Kṛṣṇa suggests making war on Duryodhana and reinstating Yudhiṣṭhira in power, Yudhiṣṭhira will not fall in with it, though

¹ Here ends the *Sabhaparvan*, the second book.

² This forms the contents of the extensive third book, called *Vanaparvan* or 'forest section.'



Draupadī complains in bitter terms of the disgrace which the Kauravas have brought upon her. Later on, too, Draupadī and Bhīma repeatedly urge Yudhiṣṭhira to pull himself together and regain his throne by force. Yudhiṣṭhira declares each time that he must remain true to his promise and spend twelve years in the forest. Bhīma reproaches him with unmanliness, telling him that the first duty of a warrior is to fight, that thirteen months have now elapsed, which Yudhiṣṭhira may count as thirteen years, or that he can make up for the breaking of the promise by performing an expiatory sacrifice. Thereupon Yudhiṣṭhira also objects that Duryodhana has mighty and unconquerable allies in Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and Karṇa. At this moment the old ṛṣi Vyāsa appears once again and gives Yudhiṣṭhira a charm by the help of which Arjuna is to obtain heavenly weapons from the gods, which will assist them in gaining a victory over the Kauravas. Soon afterwards, therefore, Yudhiṣṭhira sends Arjuna to Indra to obtain the heavenly weapons. Arjuna wanders to the Himālayas, where he meets Indra in the form of an ascetic. The latter sends him to Śiva, who must first give his consent for the weapons to be delivered to Arjuna. Then Arjuna practises severe asceticism, whereupon Śiva appears to him in the form of a Kirāta, a wild hill-man. Arjuna gets involved in a fierce fight with the supposed Kirāta, until the latter reveals himself as the god Śiva and presents him with irresistible weapons. The world-protectors Yama, Varuṇa and Kubera soon also appear, and lend him their weapons, but Mātali, Indra's charioteer, conducts him to Indra's celestial city, where he receives still more weapons. He lives very happily in Indra's heaven for five years, and at Indra's command, a gandharva gives him lessons in singing and dancing.

Meanwhile the other Pāṇḍavas live in the forest by the chase, obtaining scanty nourishment from wild animals, roots and fruits. As Arjuna is so long absent, they are most anxious about him. Though the ṛṣi Lomaśa, who has just been on a visit to Indra's heaven, comes to them and consoles them by telling them that Arjuna is dwelling safely with Indra, they are unsatisfied, and prepare to go and seek Arjuna. They wander forth into the Gandhamādana hills, where they are very much terrified by a fearful storm and awful thunder and lightning. Draupadī faints from fear and fatigue. Then Bhīma thinks of his son Ghaṭotkaca, whom he had begotten with the giantess Hidimbā; and this rakṣasa appears immediately and takes Draupadī on his back; he also fetches other rākṣasas, who carry the Pāṇḍavas on their backs, and thus all of them are carried to a hermitage on the Ganges near the divine mountain Kailāsa, where they rest under a mighty Badarī tree.

As Draupadī expresses a longing for the heavenly lotus flowers, Bhīma scours the mountain wilderness, to the terror of the wild beasts, for he slays one wild elephant with another one, and one lion with another lion, or simply kills them with a blow of his fist. Here he also

encounters *Hanumat*, the ape king, who obstructs his path and warns him not to proceed further, where only immortals may tread. *Bhīma*, however, tells him who he is, and orders him out of his path. The ape does not move, pretends to be ill, and says that *Bhīma* need only push his tail aside, in order to be able to pass by. In vain does *Bhīma* now endeavour to raise the ape's tail. The latter now smilingly discloses that he is *Hanumat*, 'so very well known from the *Rāmāyaṇa*'.¹ *Bhīma* now rejoices exceedingly at seeing his brother, for both of them are sons of the wind god, and he engages in a conversation with him. Finally *Hanumat* shows *Bhīma* the way to *Kubera's* garden, but warns him not to pluck flowers there, whereupon they take affectionate leave of each other. *Bhīma* soon reaches the lotus lake and garden of *Kubera*, where the divine lotuses grow. He is confronted with *rākṣasas* who forbid him to pluck flowers, and inform him that, at any rate, he must first obtain *Kubera's* permission. *Bhīma* retorts that a warrior does not ask permission, but takes what he wants. He fights with the *rākṣasas*, puts them to flight, and plucks the flowers.

After various adventures and fights with *rākṣasas*, the fifth year approaches, when *Arjuna* is to return from heaven. The brothers repair to the 'white mountain' (the heavenly mountain of *Kailāsa*) to meet him. *Bhīma* again engages in a fight with *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*, the guardians of *Kubera's* garden, and slays many of their number, among others *Maṇimat*, who had once spat on the head of the holy ṛṣi *Agastya*, wherefore *Kubera* had been cursed by the ṛṣi. *Bhīma's* deed now released *Kubera* from the curse, and for this reason he is by no means enraged at the bloodshed caused among the demons ; on the contrary, he bids *Bhīma* and his brothers a very cordial welcome.

On the glorious mountain they at last meet *Arjuna* again, who comes careering along in *Indra's* chariot driven by *Mātali*. After the most cordial of greetings, *Arjuna* tells them of all his experiences and adventures, and especially how he has fought victoriously with the *Nivātakavaca* demons who dwell by the sea, and with the inhabitants of *Hiraṇyapura*, the city which flies through the air.

The *Pāṇḍavas* now live happily in the pleasure groves of *Kubera*, and four years pass, as if they had been a single night. However, in order not to be diverted from their earthly cares and fights, they resolve to quit the heavenly regions. Having descended *Kailāsa*, they repair to the hills and forests on the bank of the *Jumnā*.

Here *Bhīma* had an unpleasant adventure, and his life was saved by *Yudhiṣṭhira*. Roaming in the woods, *Bhīma* espies an immense snake which hurls itself at him furiously, and clings around him so tightly that

¹ Thus *Bhīma* speaks of him, *Mahābhārata*, III, 147, 11. *Hanumat* here gives a short extract from the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

he cannot extricate himself. His brother Yudhiṣṭhira finds him in this predicament. Now the snake is none other than the famous old king *Nahuṣa*, who had been cast out from heaven as the result of a curse of *Agastya*, and transformed into a serpent. He is not to be released from this curse until he can find somebody who can answer all the questions which he puts. Yudhiṣṭhira gives satisfactory answers to all his philosophical questions, whereupon he sets *Bhīma* free, and himself released from the condition of a snake, *Nahuṣa* returns to heaven.

Soon after this, they return to the *Kāmyaka* forest. Here they are again visited by *Kṛṣṇa*. He brings *Draupadī* the desired news of her children, and exhorts Yudhiṣṭhira to make sure of allies for the fight against the *Kauravas*, and to make other preparations for the war. As usual, however, Yudhiṣṭhira assures him that he must remain faithful to his promise, and that he does not wish to think of war until the thirteenth year shall have elapsed.

Pious Brahmins, too, often visit the *Pāṇḍavas* in the forest. One of these Brahmins goes straight from the *Pāṇḍavas* to the court of King *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, where he relates how much the *Pāṇḍavas*, and especially *Draupadī*, have to suffer in their struggle with the elements in the wilderness. Whilst the old king laments at this, and is overcome with remorse, his son *Duryodhana* is much rejoiced, and, incited by *Śakuni* and *Karṇa*, he decided to visit the *Pāṇḍavas* in the forest, so as to gloat over their distress. As a pretext they represent to *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* that they must visit the cattle-pens situated in the vicinity of the forest, to inspect the herds, count the heads of cattle and mark the young calves. They ride forth in a great cavalcade, inspect the cattle, and give themselves up to the pleasures of the chase. However, when they wish to proceed in the neighbourhood of the spot where the *Pāṇḍavas* are staying, they are held up by *gandharvas*. A fight ensues, and *Duryodhana* is ignominiously taken prisoner by the king of the *gandharvas*. The *Kauravas* hasten to the *Pāṇḍavas* for aid, which the noble Yudhiṣṭhira does not refuse. After a hard fight, *Duryodhana* is liberated by the *Pāṇḍavas* from the captivity of the *gandharva* king. Filled with shame and pain at this humiliation, *Duryodhana* is about to end his life, and it is only with some difficulty that his friends succeed in diverting him from his suicidal frame of mind.

Karṇa has now a new plan to annoy the *Pāṇḍavas*. He sallies forth on a great campaign of conquest in all the four regions of the earth, to win the rule over the whole earth for *Duryodhana*, so that he too may be able to offer a great king's sacrifice. After the campaign of conquest has been brought to a successful conclusion, a great sacrifice is indeed performed; but as the *Rājasūya* sacrifice can only be performed once in one and the same family, and as Yudhiṣṭhira has already offered a sacrifice of this kind, it has to be a different sacrifice, called the *Vaiṣṇava*, which is supposed to have been offered only by the god *Viṣṇu* himself. In order to



vex the Pāṇḍavas, Duryodhana invites them to this great sacrificial feast. Yudhiṣṭhira declines politely, while Bhīma sends a message that the Pāṇḍavas will pour out the sacrificial ghee of their anger over the Kauravas after the thirteenth year, in the sacrifice of battle.

During the last year of their sojourn in the forest, the Pāṇḍavas were threatened by a great loss. One day when all the brothers were out hunting, their wife Draupadī, who had stayed behind alone, was stolen away by *Jayadratha*, king of the Sindhus, who passed by. The Pāṇḍavas immediately pursue him, and he is overcome, and chastised and humiliated by Arjuna and Bhīma. Bhīma would fain have killed him, but as he is Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son-in-law, Yudhiṣṭhira grants him his life.

The Pāṇḍavas are very sorrowful about the rape of Draupadī. Though Jayadratha has been punished, they nevertheless feel humiliated. Yudhiṣṭhira, especially, is often in a sad mood, reproaches himself for the misfortune of which he is the cause, and laments above all the sad fate of Draupadī. Now Yudhiṣṭhira fears none of the Kauravas so greatly as Karṇa, who had come into the world with a natural coat-of-mail and ear-rings which make him invulnerable. In order to release Yudhiṣṭhira from his fear of Karṇa, Indra appears before Karṇa in the form of a Brahmin, and begs him for the coat-of-mail and the ear-rings. Karṇa, who can refuse nothing to a Brahmin, gives him the coat-of-mail and the ear-rings, which he cuts from his body without blinking an eye-lash. By way of a return gift, Indra presents him with a never-failing spear, which, however, he is only to use against one enemy and in the case of extreme emergency.

Distressed by the rape of Draupadī, the Pāṇḍavas left the Kāmyaka forest and went to Dvaitavana. There they met with their last forest adventure. An antelope which is roaming through the forest happens to catch a Brahmin's fire-sticks with her antlers, and hurries away. The Brahmin, who requires the sticks for the sacrifice, requests the Pāṇḍavas to get them for him, and they pursue the animal in full chase, but cannot come up with it, and finally the animal vanishes from sight. They lament their bad luck. Wearied by the bootless chase and tortured by thirst, they look around for water. Nakula climbs a tree, and sees a lake in the distance. At the request of Yudhiṣṭhira, he goes thither, to fetch water in the quivers. He comes to a pretty lake, with beautiful, clear water, surrounded by cranes. However, just as he is about to drink, an invisible spirit (*yakṣa*) speaks from the air: "Do no violence, O friend, this is my property; first answer my questions, then drink and take water!" But Nakula gives no heed to these words, drinks and sinks lifeless to the ground. As he is so long away, Sahadeva goes to seek him, but he meets with the same fate. Yudhiṣṭhira now sends Arjuna, who fares no better, and finally Bhīma, who vainly endeavours to fight with the invisible yakṣa. He, too, drinks from the lake, and falls lifeless to the ground. Boding no good,

Yudhiṣṭhira at last goes himself, to see what has become of his brothers. Horror-stricken, he sees them all lying dead, and begins to lament and complain. Now when he approaches the lake, he too hears the voice of the yakṣa warning him not to drink before he has answered his questions. Yudhiṣṭhira declares himself willing to answer the questions, and there ensues a most interesting play of questions and answers, in which, with the exception of a few riddles in the style of the ancient Vedic brahmodyas,¹ almost the whole of Indian ethics is recited. Only a few examples will be quoted here :

The yakṣa : "What is weightier than the earth ? What is higher than the sky ? What is swifter than the wind ? What is more numerous than grass ?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "A mother is weightier than the earth. The father is higher than the sky. The spirit is swifter than the wind. Thoughts are more numerous than grass."

The yakṣa : "Who is the friend of the traveller ? Who is the friend of him who remains at home ? Who is the friend of the sick ? Who is the friend of the dying ?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "A caravan is the friend of the traveller. The wife is the friend of him who remains at home. The doctor is the friend of the sick. Charity is the friend of the dying."

The yakṣa : "Who is the foe who is difficult to conquer and which is the never-ending disease ? Which man is considered good, and which bad ?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "Anger is the foe that is difficult to conquer. Greed is the never-ending disease. He who is friendly towards all creatures is considered good ; he who knows no mercy, is considered bad."

The yakṣa : "What, O king, is called delusion, and what is pride ? What do we mean by idleness, and what is sorrow ?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "To be deluded with regard to Dharma,² is delusion ; to be proud of oneself is pride. Inactivity with regard to Dharma is idleness, and ignorance is true sorrow."

The yakṣa : "What do the ṛṣis call constancy, and what is known as bravery ? What is the best bath ? What is charity ?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "Steadfastness in the fulfilment of one's duty is constancy ; bravery is the control of the senses. The best bath is getting rid of uncleanness of thought ; but charity consists of affording protection to all creatures."

¹ Cf. above pp. 160 f. The riddle there quoted from the *Vājasaneyi-Saṁhitā* XXIII, 45 f. here recurs (*Mahābhārata* III, 313, 65 f.).

² There is no word in any European language which is quite synonymous with the Sanskrit word *dharma*. *Dharma* signifies 'the norm of action' and includes the conceptions 'law and custom, morality and religion, duty and virtue'. It is therefore impossible to translate the word in the same way in each case. Cf. above p. 285.



The yakṣa : "Tell me, O king, of what does Brahman-hood really consist, of descent, of the way of life, of the reading of the Veda, or of erudition?"

Yudhiṣṭhira : "Listen, dear Yakṣa ! Brahman-hood is based neither on descent, on the reading of the Veda, nor on erudition, but solely on a good life ; of this there can be no doubt. The Brahmin must pay more attention to the ordering of his life than to all else ; so long as his good life is unimpaired, he himself is unimpaired ; if his good life is ruined, he himself is ruined. Those who learn and teach and meditate on the sciences, are fools if they humour the passions. The wise man is he who does his duty. A scoundrel, though he know all the four Vedas, is worse than a Śūdra. He who but offers the fire-sacrifice, but curbs his senses, may count as a Brahmin".¹

The yakṣa is so pleased with Yudhiṣṭhira's answers that he is willing to call one of his brothers back to life. Yudhiṣṭhira is to choose which of his four brothers shall be brought back to life. He chooses Nakula, on the grounds that his father had two wives, and that it is only right and fair that a son of the second wife, Mādri, be alive too. This answer pleases the yakṣa so immensely that he calls all the brothers to life again. Now in reality the yakṣa is none other than the god Dharma himself, the "father"² of Yudhiṣṭhira, the god of right and morality. Before he vanishes, he grants the Pāṇḍavas the additional favour that they may remain unrecognised in the *thirteenth* year ; for the twelve years of their life in the forest are now over, and, in accordance with the arrangement, they must still spend the thirteenth year unrecognised among people.

The Pāṇḍavas at the Court of King Virāṭa³

The Pāṇḍavas decide to go to the court of Viāṭa, king of the Matsyas, and to stay there under false names in appropriate disguise. They conceal their weapons near the cemetery outside the city on a tree, upon which they hang a corpse so that no one shall venture near ; they tell the herdsmen who watch them do this, that it is their mother who is one hundred and eighty years old, and whom they are 'burying' in this way according to the custom of their ancestors. First of all Yudhiṣṭhira goes to Virāṭa, gives himself out as an excellent dice-player, and is appointed as

¹ III, 313. Similar definitions of the 'brahman' are frequent in Buddhistic texts, cf. for instance, *Vinayapiṭaka*, *Mahāvagga* I, 2, 2 f. *Suttanipāta*, *Vāsetṭhasutta* and *Milindapañha* IV, 5, 26. A version of this story of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Yakṣa is found in the Jaina Hemavijaya's "*Kathāratnākara*", No. 21 (German translation by J. Hartel, Vol. I, pp. 58 ff.).

² See above p. 289.

³ The events at the court of Virāṭa form the contents of the *fourth* book, called *Virāṭaparvan*.

the king's companion and counsellor. The others then come in their turn. Bhīma takes service as a cook. Arjuna, taking the feminine name Bṛhannalā, gives himself out as an eunuch, and is appointed as dancing-master to the king's daughter Uttarā. Nakula is engaged as a horse-tamer, Sahadeva as an overseer of cattle, whilst Draupadī is engaged by the queen as her chambermaid.

The Pāṇḍavas soon gain great popularity at Virāṭa's court, especially as Bhīma has distinguished himself by killing the world-famous athlete Jīmūta at a wrestling match organised in honour of the god Brahman.

Draupadī, on the other hand, had an unpleasant adventure. Kīcaka, a brother-in-law of the king and commander of his army falls in love with the beautiful chambermaid, and accosts her. Now Draupadī, at the time of her appointment by the queen, had given out that she was the wife of five gandharvas who would protect her in case of need. By promising him a rendezvous, Draupadī entices her pursuer at dead of night into the dancing hall, where Bhīma is on the watch for him and strangles him after a mighty struggle. Thereupon Draupadī summons the watchmen and says that one of her gandharvas has killed Kīcaka, because he had persecuted her with love-making. Kīcaka's mighty relatives wish to burn the chambermaid on the funeral pyre with the corpse; but Bhīma again comes to the rescue, and in his guise of a gandharva, kills 105 sūtas (for Kīcaka is a sūta) and releases Draupadī. Then the citizens of the town demand the dismissal of the chambermaid who is so dangerous by reason of her gandharvas, and the king gives a command accordingly. However, Draupadī begs the queen to let her remain for another thirteen days, after which time the gandharvas would fetch her away. (For all but thirteen days of the thirteenth year has expired.)

In vain does Duryodhana send out spies to find out the whereabouts of the Pāṇḍavas. The spies only bring back the news that Kīcaka has been killed by gandharvas, which is quite agreeable to Duryodhana, as the Matsyas are a hostile nation. Moreover, Kīcaka had often oppressed Suśarman, the king of the Trigartas. Now the Trigartas arrange with the Kauravas to organise a joint raid on the land of the Matsyas. Just as the thirteenth year of banishment expires, there is news that the Trigartas have invaded the country and have stolen King Virāṭa's cattle. Virāṭa prepares for the fight, provides Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Nakula and Sahadeva with weapons too, and sallies forth into the battle-field against the Trigartas. A mighty battle ensues. Virāṭa is taken prisoner, but is liberated immediately by Bhīma, and finally the Trigartas are defeated, thanks to the assistance of the Pāṇḍavas, who, nevertheless, remain unrecognised.

While Virāṭa is fighting against the Trigartas, the Kauravas invade the land of the Matsyas at another point, and steal much cattle. The cowherds approach the young prince Uttara, who has stayed behind in the

city, and request him to go forth to battle against the Kauravas. Now he has no charioteer. Then Draupadī, through the agency of the princess, persuades him to take Arjuna as his charioteer. He receives a suit of armour, and they go forth to battle. When Uttara sees the mighty hosts of the Kauravas, he is seized with fear, leaps from the chariot and is about to flee; but Arjuna catches him up, drags him back on to the chariot by the hair, and exhorts him to courage. Then they drive to the tree on which the weapons are concealed, and Arjuna fetches his weapons. When he reveals himself to Uttara as the mighty hero Arjuna, the former takes courage again. Uttara now becomes Arjuna's charioteer. A mighty battle is now fought, in which Arjuna fights with Duryodhana, Karna, Bhīṣma and the other heroes of the Kauravas, and of course gains a glorious victory. Though the Kauravas harboured a suspicion that it was Arjuna who was fighting against them, they did not recognise him.

After he has won the victory, Arjuna takes the weapons back to the tree, and returns to the city as the dancing-master Bṛhannalā and Uttara's charioteer, having impressed upon Uttara that he must not betray him. In the meantime Virāṭa and the Pāṇḍavas have returned after defeating the Trigartas. The king is very anxious when he hears that his son has gone forth against the Kauravas, but the news of the victory soon reaches him. Uttara is received in triumph. He relates that it is not he who has defeated the Kauravas, but that a god in the form of a beautiful youth has aided him. Three days later the thirteenth year comes to an end. To the astonishment of the king, the five Pāṇḍavas appear in their true form in the hall, and disclose their identity. Virāṭa rejoices greatly, and immediately offers Arjuna his daughter as a wife. Arjuna accepts her, not for himself, but for his son Abhimanyu, for by making her his daughter-in-law, he would be testifying to the fact that, though he had lived in such close association with her for a whole year, she had remained pure. The wedding of Abhimanyu and Uttarā is soon celebrated with great pomp, and numerous kings amongst whom are, of course, Drupada and Kṛṣṇa, arrive with costly presents.

Peace Negotiations and Preparations for War¹

At this wedding feast the Pāṇḍavas and their friends consult together as to what attitude should be taken up with regard to the Kauravas. Kṛṣṇa proposes that an ambassador be sent to Duryodhana to request him to give back to the Pāṇḍavas their half kingdom. After a long consultation it is then accordingly decided to send the old family priest of King Drupada as an ambassador to the Kauravas.

¹ These form the contents of the fifth book (*Udyogaparvan*).

But even before the beginning of the negotiations, the Pāṇḍavas as well as the Kauravas are seeking to enlist as many allies as possible on their respective sides ; and both parties are simultaneously endeavouring to win over several mighty kings. Thus Duryodhana seeks to win Kṛṣṇa himself over to his side, whom we have hitherto known only as the intimate friend of the Pāṇḍavas. As chance will have it, Duryodhana comes to Kṛṣṇa while the latter is asleep, and Arjuna arrives immediately after him. When Kṛṣṇa awakens, his eyes first light on Arjuna. Now as Duryodhana had come first, but as Arjuna has first been beheld by Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa thinks that he ought not to give either of them an answer containing a refusal ; he therefore says that he will assist the one with his advice, whilst he will place an army of herdsmen at the disposal of the other. Duryodhana chooses the latter, Arjuna the former. For this reason Kṛṣṇa promises that he will not actually participate in the fights, but will only stand by the Pāṇḍavas as a counsellor, as Arjuna's charioteer. Śalya, too, king of the Madras, who, accompanied by a host of warriors, is already on his way to Yudhiṣṭhira in order to join his side, is invited by Duryodhana to fight on the side of the Kauravas. Śalya agrees to do so, but goes to Yudhiṣṭhira nevertheless. The last named, who is otherwise always represented as a model of virtue, agrees upon disgraceful treachery with Śalya. Śalya is to fight on the side of the Kauravas, but as Karṇa's charioteer, he is to drive the chariot badly and thus cause Karṇa's fall, should there be single combat between him and Arjuna.

While both sides are thus already thinking of war, Drupada's venerable priest comes to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra as an ambassador, and puts the peace terms of the Pāṇḍavas before him. The king receives him in a very worthy manner, but gives him no definite answer, saying that he himself will send his charioteer Sañjaya as an ambassador to Yudhiṣṭhira. He does this after a few days ; but Sañjaya's message is merely that Dhṛtarāṣṭra desires peace, and no offer is made to the Pāṇḍavas. Thereupon Yudhiṣṭhira sends back the reply that he must either receive Indra-prastha and half of the kingdom back, or the fight shall commence. In order to avoid bloodshed among relatives, he even declares his willingness to accept the peace on condition that Duryodhana will place five villages at his disposal. The Kauravas now confer upon this reply which Sañjaya brings back. Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Vidura vainly strive to persuade Duryodhana to yield and make peace. As Dhṛtarāṣṭra shows himself entirely feeble and powerless, even this conference breaks up without the achievement of any result.

The Pāṇḍavas, too, again debate on the peace, and Kṛṣṇa offers to make another attempt, and to go in person to the Kauravas as a messenger of peace. The Pāṇḍavas gratefully accept this offer. Even the defiant Bhīma speaks in favour of the peace in words whose mildness is so astonishing, 'as if mountains had grown light and fire cold', that Kṛṣṇa



himself is surprised. On the other hand, some of the heroes, and more especially Draupadī, the wife of heroes, are impatient of any negotiations for peace, and would prefer to declare war at once ; but Yudhiṣṭhira insists upon the message of peace. In tender words he remembers their mother Kuntī, and he begs Kṛṣṇa to visit her, as she is living with Vidura at the court of the Kauravas, and to ask after her welfare.

Kṛṣṇa repairs to the Kauravas, taking benedictions on his way. He is received splendidly by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, but only accepts Vidura's hospitality. He immediately visits Kuntī and gives her Yudhiṣṭhira's greetings. The mother of heroes laments the separation from her sons in bitter words, but she is still more pained at the insult offered to Draupadī, and reproaches Yudhiṣṭhira with weakness. She asks Kṛṣṇa to tell her sons that they should not forget their duty as warriors, and should not hesitate to stake their lives. She says that the moment has now come "for the sake of which a warrior's wife brings children into the world." The next morning Kṛṣṇa goes to the assembly of the Kaurava princes in festive array, and makes a speech as to peace. Dhṛtarāṣṭra announces that he, for his part, desires nothing better than peace, but that he is powerless to do anything against his son Duryodhana. Then Kṛṣṇa turns his peace exhortations to Duryodhana, and Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Vidura also do their utmost to persuade Duryodhana to accept the peace terms. The latter, however, announces that he will not cede to the Pāṇḍavas even as much land as will cover the point of a needle. After he has left the assembly in anger, Kṛṣṇa proposes that the well-disposed among the Kauravas should deliver Duryodhana and his associates as prisoners to the Pāṇḍavas. Dhṛtarāṣṭra does not agree to this, but he sends for his wife Gāndhārī, in order that she may endeavour to persuade the obstinate son to make peace. Gāndhārī comes in, and reproaches the aged king violently for having abdicated in favour of his son ; but her exhortations to Duryodhana are just as fruitless as those of the others. On the contrary, Duryodhana and his associates hatch a plan to take Kṛṣṇa prisoner, so as to dispose of a powerful foe in this way. The plan, however, does not remain a secret, and Duryodhana is severely admonished by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura for having planned this violation of the law of embassy. After Bhīṣma and Droṇa, too, have vainly spoken in favour of peace, even this peace embassy of Kṛṣṇa's must be regarded as having failed.

Before Kṛṣṇa departs, he still has a secret interview with Karṇa. This brave hero is generally regarded as the son of a charioteer (sūta). The story goes, however, that in reality he was begotten by Sūrya, the sun-god, and Kuntī, when the latter was as yet a virgin, in a marvellous fashion, so that Kuntī's virginity was not violated. But after she had given birth to Karṇa, she was ashamed, and put the boy out on the river in a little water-tight basket. There he was found by a charioteer, who brought him up. Karṇa is therefore really an elder brother to the Pāṇḍavas.

Kṛṣṇa refers to this, and tries to persuade him to seize the throne and to appoint his younger brother Yudhiṣṭhira as his successor, as the Pāṇḍavas would agree to this. Karṇa, however, refuses to listen to such treachery to his friend Duryodhana ; and when Kuntī, supported by Sūrya himself, tries in similar fashion to persuade him to go over to the side of the Pāṇḍavas, Karṇa only answers her in hard words : he says that she has never been a good mother to him, and that he does not now want to be her son.

Kṛṣṇa therefore returns to the Pāṇḍavas with his mission unaccomplished, and reports on his vain attempts to establish peace. A wild battle-cry is raised when Kṛṣṇa relates that there was even an attempt to take him prisoner. Both sides now actively prepare for war. The Pāṇḍavas choose Dhṛṣṭadyumna, son of King Drupada, as their field-marshal, and the Kauravas choose Bhīṣma. The ranks for the battle are drawn up and arranged. Bhīṣma enumerates the heroes to Duryodhana as chariot-fighters according to their rank ; he places Karṇa lower than all the other heroes, therefore offering him deadly insult. Karṇa swears that he will not participate in the fight until Bhīṣma has fallen. Then Bhīṣma enumerates the principal heroes of the Pāṇḍavas, and declares that he is willing to fight with all of them, except with Śikhaṇḍin. The latter had come into the world as a maiden, the daughter of Drupada, and had only been transformed into a man later, when a yakṣa exchanged sexes with her.¹ Bhīṣma still regards this warrior as a woman, and he will not fight with a woman.

When the preparations for war have been completed, *Ulūka*, the son of a gambler, is sent to the camp of the Pāṇḍavas by the Kauravas with a declaration of war in the form of insulting speeches. He is sent back by the Pāṇḍavas with no less insulting and defiant words. Thereupon the two hosts march to Kurukṣetra.

*The Great Eighteen Days' Fight*²

The two hosts range themselves with their auxiliaries on either side of the great Kuru field. Watchwords and signs are determined, by which friend can be distinguished from foe. Then certain covenants are agreed on among the combatants : only opponents of equal birth and bearing the same kind of arms are to fight each other ; chariot-fighters are to fight only chariot-fighters, warriors on elephants only warriors on elephants, riders with riders, and foot-soldiers with foot-soldiers ; no one is to fight without first having challenged his opponent to fight ; those who have

¹ On his and similar changes of sex in fairy-tale literature cf. Th. Benfey, *Das Panthechatantra*, I, pp. 41 ff.

² The sixth book (*Bhīṣmaparvan*) begins here and ends with the fall of the leader Bhīṣma.



surrendered, or who are *hors de combat*, also the fugitives, are not to be killed ; drivers, beasts of burden, armour-bearers and musicians are also to be spared.

Before the beginning of the battle, the saint Vyāsa appears and bestows on *Saṅjaya*, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's charioteer, the gift of being able to see everything that takes place on the field of battle. He also makes him invulnerable, so that he may be able to report daily to the old, blind king. The descriptions of the battle, which now follow, are put in the mouth of *Saṅjaya* as an eye-witness, and this lends them a most realistic vividness.¹

The venerable *Bhīṣma*, the great-uncle of the Kauravas as well as of the Pāṇḍavas, commands the Kaurava armies during the first ten days of the battle. In fiery speech he exhorts the warriors to fight bravely : "The great gate of heaven stands wide open to-day, O warriors ! Enter in by this gate to the world of Indra and of Brahman !.....It is not right for a warrior to die at home of a disease ; the eternal duty of the warrior is to seek death in the fight."² Thus they go forth courageously to battle, and brilliantly adorned with the shining armour and weapons, the two hosts face each other.

Thundering war-cries and loud battle music give the signal for the commencement of the fight. Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas now meet in terrible conflict, without regard for relationship, for the father knows not the son, nor the brother his brother, the uncle knows not his sister's son, nor the friend his friend. The elephants cause dreadful devastation, and there is bloody slaughter. Now it is this, now that hero who is seen engaged in single combat ; victory is now with the Pāṇḍavas, now with the Kauravas. But when night falls, the combatants retire, and it is not until the next morning that the armies are drawn up again in fresh battle array, and the fight begins anew. *Bhīṣma* and *Arjuna* encounter each other repeatedly, and both of them fight so bravely that gods and demons watch the conflict in astonishment. But every time that things go badly for the Kauravas. *Duryodhana* reproaches *Bhīṣma* for showing too much regard whilst fighting against the Pāṇḍavas ; and when the Pāṇḍavas suffer losses, *Kṛṣṇa* reproaches *Arjuna* for not shooting direct at *Bhīṣma*. Many of *Duryodhana*'s brothers have already fallen in the fight. Now *Duryodhana* again blames *Bhīṣma* for showing too much mercy to the Pāṇḍavas. He is to defeat the foe, or else let *Karṇa* take command. Overwhelmed by pain

¹ Similarly, the Langobardian poets frequently resort to the artifice "of observing the progress of the battle through the eyes of a scout who is set on an eminence, and then reports what he has seen ; by this means the artist avoids a tedious description, and has the twofold advantage of being in a position to limit himself to the main incidents, and of thrilling his hearers to a greater degree." (R. Koegel, *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur*, I, 1, Strassburg, 1894, p. 120.)

² VI, 17, 8 ff.

and anger, Bhīṣma promises to fight mercilessly next day against all, with the sole exception of Śikhaṇḍin, who had once been a woman. "Sleep in peace, O son of Gāndhārī," says he (VI, 99, 23), "I shall gain a great victory to-morrow, which shall be spoken of, as long as the world endures." The Pāṇḍavas do, indeed, suffer heavy losses on the ninth day of the battle. Bhīṣma rages in the host of the foe like the god of death, whilst Arjuna, who still reveres Bhīṣma as his 'grandfather',¹ shows too much consideration in fighting. When Kṛṣṇa observes this, he rushes himself upon Bhīṣma to kill him, but Arjuna holds him back forcibly, reminding him of his oath not to fight. Put to wild flight by Bhīṣma, the Pāṇḍava warriors return to their camp at nightfall.

The Pāṇḍavas use the night for a council of war. As they know that Bhīṣma will not fight against Śikhaṇḍin, they decide² to place the latter in the van the next day; but Arjuna is to be concealed behind Śikhaṇḍin, and direct his arrows against Bhīṣma. It is only unwillingly that Arjuna agrees to this treachery, and he remembers with pain and shame that, as a boy, he had played on Bhīṣma's lap and called him 'daddy'. Kṛṣṇa, however, succeeds in persuading him that only he can conquer Bhīṣma, and it is only by killing the mighty opponent that he will fulfil his warrior's duty.

Thus dawn breaks on the tenth day of the battle, and Śikhaṇḍin is placed in the van by the Pāṇḍavas, while the Kauravas advance with Bhīṣma at their head. All day long the conflict rages between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas around Bhīṣma. Thousands and thousands sink to the ground on both sides. At last Śikhaṇḍin, behind whom Arjuna is concealed, succeeds in coming up with Bhīṣma. The latter smilingly awaits Śikhaṇḍin's arrows, without defending himself against him. But however violently the latter aims at Bhīṣma, the arrows do not hurt him. But soon Arjuna, hidden behind Śikhaṇḍin, begins to shower arrow upon arrow on the venerable hero. And Bhīṣma turning to Duśśāsana who is fighting beside him, says: "*These* arrows, which are completely destroying my life-spirits like messengers of Yama, are not Śikhaṇḍin's arrows; these arrows, which penetrate into my limbs like raging, writhing serpents distended with venom, are not Śikhaṇḍin's arrows, they are shot by *Arjuna*".³

¹ The great-uncle Bhīṣma is usually called thus by the sons of Pāṇḍu.

² In the old poem it was probably Kṛṣṇa who gave this advice. The version given in our present *Mahābhārata* is simply absurd. The sons of Pāṇḍu, we are told, betake themselves at night time to Bhīṣma in the hostile camp, and ask him quite naively how they can best kill him. Bhīṣma himself then advises them to place Śikhaṇḍin opposite him, and to let Arjuna fight behind him. So it is narrated at the beginning of Canto VI, 107; in the middle of the same Canto we have the beautiful speeches in which Arjuna, full of tenderness, lets his thoughts dwell on his 'grandfather' Bhīṣma, who had rocked him in his knees as a child; and at the end of the same Canto it is the same Arjuna who comes forward with the plan of killing Bhīṣma in so unfair a manner. Cf. Ad. Holtzmann. *Das Mahābhārata*, II, 172 f.

³ VI, 119, 63 f.



Once more he pulls himself together, and hurls an arrow at Arjuna, which the latter catches and shivers into three pieces. Then he takes his sword and shield to defend himself, but Arjuna smashes his shield into a hundred pieces. Then Yudhiṣṭhira orders his people to attack Bhīṣma, and the Pāṇḍavas rush from all sides on the warrior who is standing alone, until, just before sunset, bleeding from innumerable wounds, he falls headlong from his chariot.¹ And there are so many arrows sticking in his body on all sides that he does not touch the ground in his fall, but rests on a bed of arrows.

Loud is the jubilation among the Pāṇḍavas, but boundless the lamentation in the camp of the Kauravas. It is agreed to call a truce in honour of the fallen hero, who had been so closely related to both the belligerent parties. And Pāṇḍavas as well as Kauravas stand around the dying hero, filled with admiration and sorrow. He greets the warriors, and tries to speak to them. The head of the dying man hangs feebly down. He begs for a cushion. They hasten to bring fine cushions, but he waves them aside smilingly. Then Arjuna takes three arrows from his quiver and supports Bhīṣma's head on them.

Bhīṣma declares contentedly that this is what he wanted, and that this is a fitting bed for a hero. The dying hero exhorts Duryodhana in impressive words to conclude peace: "Let this battle end with my death, O my son," he says, "Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas". But like a man sick unto death who refuses medicine, Duryodhana refuses the wise counsel of Bhīṣma.

The defiant, but, noble Karṇa also approaches to pay his respect to the dying hero. With dim eyes, the aged chief embraces him with *one* hand and exhorts him also to make peace with the Pāṇḍavas, the more so as, being the son of Kuntī, he is their brother. But Karṇa declares that he must remain faithful to Duryodhana and do his duty as a warrior in the fight against the Pāṇḍavas. He says that he cannot do otherwise. Reconciled, Bhīṣma gives the brave warrior permission to fight, though it is truly painful to him that all his efforts towards peace have been in vain.²

¹ The foolish tale (VI, 116) in which Bhīṣma explains to Yudhiṣṭhira in the midst of the battle that he is weary of life, whereupon the latter, with cheap courage, exhorts his men to fight against the hero, is just as much in contradiction with this description (VI, 120, 58 ff.) as the childish story (VI, 120, 32 ff.) which tells how Vasus (divine beings) and Ṛṣis appear in the sky and approve of Bhīṣma's determination to die. These are later interpolations, which pursue the twofold aim of whitewashing the Pāṇḍavas and making Bhīṣma himself into a demi-god. In the old poem Bhīṣma was surely only a mighty hero, whom the Pāṇḍavas brought low in an unchivalrous manner. But the story of VI, 116, is known in the 'Dūtaghaṭṭakā' (v. 19), ascribed to Bhāsa.

² In the old poem Bhīṣma surely did not live longer after his downfall than was necessary to address a few words to Duryodhana and Karṇa. Our *Mahābhārata* relates the curious story that Bhīṣma fell in the sun's southerly course, i.e., in the half-year



Now that Bhīṣma has fallen, Karṇa again participates in the battle, and at his suggestion the old teacher Droṇa is consecrated as commander-in-chief.¹ The fight is carried on under his command from the eleventh till the fifteenth day.

On the thirteenth day of the battle there is a sad event for the Pāṇḍavas. The youthful, but valiant son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu, ventures too far into the ranks of the enemy, is separated from his protectors by the Sindhu king Jayadratha, and is killed by Duśśāsana's son. Arjuna swears to take a terrible revenge on the murderer of his son, meaning Jayadratha. So the principal event of the fourteenth day of the battle is the combat between Arjuna and Jayadratha, which drags on all day, and ends in the death of the latter. As Arjuna swore, he is killed before sundown. At the same time Bhīma has been raging in Kaurava army, killing many of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

But on this day the fight is not interrupted as usual when the sun goes down. The combatants on both sides are so embittered that they can brook no interval, in spite of the approaching darkness. They fight on, by the light of torches and lamps. Individual heroes perform astounding feats. But Karṇa bears down especially hard on the Pāṇḍavas, and on Kṛṣṇa's advice the rākṣasa Ghaṭotkaca is sent out against Karṇa. The hero wrestles manfully with the giant monster, and the rākṣasa does fearful damage in the Kaurava host, until he is at last killed by Karṇa. But even in his very fall the giant Ghaṭotkaca tears an entire army of the Kauravas to the ground and crushes it. The Pāṇḍavas are very sorrowful at the death of Bhīma's son Ghaṭotkaca, only Kṛṣṇa rejoices; for the fact is that Karṇa had used the spear given him by Indra, which he had saved up for Arjuna,² against the rākṣasa. This was the very thing that Kṛṣṇa had intended.

The fight rages on, until the warriors of both sides are overpowered by sleep. It is only with difficulty that the most conscientious of the warriors keep up. Many of them, weary and drowsy, drop on their elephants, chariots and horses, whilst others, blinded by sleep, reel about and

before the winter solstice, but postponed his death until the time of the sun's northerly course (*uttarāyaṇa*) i.e., the half-year before the summer solstice. The Upaniṣads teach that the soul, which traverses along the path of the gods to the world of Brahman, must pass the *uttarāyaṇa* (*Chāndogya Up.*, V, 10, 1; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.*, VI, 2, 15). Out of this the theologians have derived the rule that a saint or yogin, who desires to be united with the Brahman, must die in the *uttarāyaṇa*. (Thus *Bhagavad-gītā*, VIII, 24.) The philosopher Śaṅkara (on *Vedānta-sūtra* IV, 2, 20 f.) already speaks of the fact that Bhīṣma had chosen the *uttarāyaṇa* for his death. At that time, therefore (8th century A.D.), the story of Bhīṣma's death must already have been related as in our present *Mahābhārata*.

¹ The battle under the leadership of Droṇa forms the contents of the seventh book (*Droṇaparvan*).

² He might only use it once, see above p. 308.



even slay their own friends. Then Arjuna the warrior takes pity, and in a resounding voice gives the combatants permission to devote some time to sleep. The foes, too, joyfully welcome this proposal, and both gods and men bless Arjuna for these words. And in the midst of the field of battle, steeds, elephants and warriors lie down to slumber.

(The following literal prose translation of a few verses can only give a feeble impression of the poetic beauty of the nocturnal scene here described ; the style recalls in some places the lyrics of a Kalidasa.)¹

"Then, overpowered by sleep, all the great chariot-fighters grew silent. And they lay down, some on their steeds' backs, others in the body of their chariots, yet others on the necks of their elephants, and many others stretched themselves on the ground. With their weapons, with clubs, swords, battle-axes and lances, fully armed, they lay down to sleep, some here, others there.....The elephants, lying on the ground breathing heavily, looked like mounds, over which giant snakes hissed by And this slumbering host, lying there unconscious, in its deep repose, resembled a wondrous picture painted on the canvas by a skilful artist.....Then the sublime moon appeared suddenly in the East with its ruddy beams of light.....In the twinkling of an eye the earth was flooded with light, and the deep, unfathomable darkness sped swiftly away..... But in the radiant moonlight this host of warriors awoke, as a grove of hundred-leaved day lotus blossoms awakens at the touch of the sun's rays. And as the tide of the ocean arises when the moon shines forth, so this sea of troops awoke at the rising of the constellation of night. But then, O King, the fight for the annihilation of the world began afresh among these people, who longed for the highest region of heaven."²

And the bloody strife lasts uninterrupted till the grey dawn. The fifteenth day of the battle is at hand. The sun rises in the East, and the warriors of both armies dismount from their horses, elephants and chariots ; gazing upwards towards the sun-god, they perform their morning devotions with folded hands. This interlude only lasts a moment, however, and the battle rages on. Two of the most excellent heroes, Kings Drupada and Virāṭa, fall by Droṇa's hand. The Pāṇḍava heroes try in vain to cut down this knight. An astonishing hand-to-hand fight between Droṇa and Arjuna, teacher and pupil, which even the celestial ones watch with admiration, leads to no result, as the pupil is not inferior to his teacher in any of his feats of arms. It is now again Kṛṣṇa who conceives a devilish trick. At his instigation, Bhīma kills an elephant which happens to answer to the name of Aśvatthāman, and then calls out loudly, approaching Droṇa, that Aśvatthāman, which is also the name of Droṇa's son, has been killed. Droṇa is frightened, but does not yet believe the report. It is only when

¹ Even apart from a few verses inserted by a later writer of ornate poetry.

² VII, 185, 37 ff.



Yudhiṣṭhira, who is famous for his love of truth, repeats the lie, at the persuasion of Kṛṣṇa, that Droṇa is compelled to believe it. Overcome with sorrow, he casts his weapons aside and stands, lost in deep meditation. This is the moment utilised by Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna to cut off the head of the eighty-five years old Droṇa. Vainly does Arjuna shout that the venerable teacher must not be slain. Dhṛṣṭadyumna has accomplished the deed, and thrown the commander-in-chief's head in the midst of the Kauravas, who, horror-stricken, take to flight. It is only now that Aśvatthāman hears the news of the death of his father, and he swears bloody vengeance on the Pañcālas and the Pāṇḍavas.

After the fall of Droṇa, *Karṇa* is chosen as commander-in-chief of the Kauravas, but he is in command for only two days.¹ On the sixteenth day of the battle, Bhīma and Aśvatthāman, Arjuna and Karṇa perform marvels of bravery, but there is no decisive result. On the morning of the seventeenth day of the battle, Karṇa demands that Śalya, king of the Madras, be given to him as his charioteer, for only then could he be a match for Arjuna, who had so excellent a charioteer in Kṛṣṇa. At first Śalya is unwilling to render service to a man of lower rank, but he finally consents on condition that he may be allowed to say what he pleases in Karṇa's presence. He then makes full use of this concession. While he is driving Karṇa's chariot, he heaps insult and scorn on the latter. It is true that Karṇa is not outdone by him : he abuses the Madras, Śalya's people, in cutting words, and describes them as being false, hypocritical, addicted to drunkenness, immorality and incest. On the other hand, Śalya tells Karṇa that the Aṅgas, over whom he rules, sell their wives and children.² At length Duryodhana restores the peace between the two, and they go forth to the battle.

While Arjuna seeks to get at Karṇa, Bhīma causes dreadful slaughter among the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, again killing many of them. With his weighty club he hurls Duśśāsana down from his chariot, springs at him, tears open his breast and drinks his warm life-blood, as he had once sworn.³ The foes retreat shuddering at this sight. Meanwhile Arjuna and Karṇa have come to close quarters, and a terrible duel is fought in which even the gods take part : Indra for Arjuna, and Surya for Karṇa. Like two wild elephants goring each other with their tusks, the two heroes shower each other with arrows. In vain does Arjuna endeavour to bring Karṇa to earth. Then one wheel of Karṇa's chariot begins to sink into the ground.⁴ Karṇa now tries to pull the chariot out ;

¹ This fight forms the contents of the *eighth* book (*Karṇaparvan*).

² The whole of the very remarkable section (VIII, 33-45) is extremely interesting from the point of view of ethnology and the history of civilization.

³ See above, p. 302.

⁴ Although we already know (see above p. 313) that this happens, in consequence of the treachery of Śalya, the matter is here presented as though this mishap had befallen

and asks Arjuna to make a break in the combat, in accordance with the rules of warfare. Kṛṣṇa, however, persuades Arjuna to have no regard to this; and Arjuna, generally a model of chivalry, kills Karna *treacherously*, while the latter is still busy with his chariot. A light radiates from the body of the fallen hero, and he retains his beauty even in death.

There is great joy in the camp of the Pāṇḍavas, but the Kauravas flee in fear.

It is only with much trouble that Duryodhana succeeds in assembling and inspiring his troops for further fighting. Śalya is the commander-in-chief on the eighteenth day of the battle.¹ Yudhiṣṭhira is selected to undertake single combat with Śalya. After a long and fierce contest, Yudhiṣṭhira slays Śalya at about midday. The Kauravas flee. Only Duryodhana and Śakuni with a small band still offer desperate resistance. Sahadeva kills Śakuni. Arjuna and Bhīma cause fearful carnage. The host of the Kauravas is now entirely annihilated.

Duryodhana flees alone to a pond, where he hides himself. Besides him, there are only three surviving heroes, Kṛtavarma, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman. The sun has already set. The camp of the Kauravas lies there, empty and forsaken. The Pāṇḍavas seek the fugitive Duryodhana and at length find him. Yudhiṣṭhira challenges him to single combat. Duryodhana says that he is not prepared to fight until the following morning, and that he has fled to the pond from fatigue and not from fear. But Yudhiṣṭhira insists upon the duel being fought on the spot, and he promises him that he shall remain king, even if he kill only one of them. The duel is to be fought between Duryodhana and Bhīma. The fight with clubs is introduced by the usual duel of words. Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa's brother, who had not taken part in the battle, comes from a long distance, in order to be a spectator of the club fight. The gods, too, watch the spectacle in astonishment and admiration. As two bulls butt each other with their horns, so the two heroes rain blows on each other with their clubs. Covered with blood all over they both continue fighting. They lacerate each other with their clubs like two cats which are quarrelling over a piece of meat. They both accomplish marvels of valour, and the issue remains indecisive. Then Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that Bhīma will never be able to defeat Duryodhana in fair fight, for though Bhīma is the stronger fighter, Duryodhana is more skilful. But he reminds him of the words of Bhīma, when on the occasion of the insult to Draupadī,² the former had sworn to

Karna as the result of the curse of a Brahman whom he had offended (VIII, 42, 41 and 90, 81). The entire narrative of the fight between Arjuna and Karna (VIII, 86-94) has been touched up to a great extent. Cf. Oldenberg, *Das Mahabharata*, pp. 50 ff., where he says that in this instance nothing is left of the old poem, but that 'a new poem was created on the old theme'.

¹ This day of battle forms the contents of the ninth book (*Śalyaparvan*)

² See above, p. 302.

smash Duryodhana's thigh. Then Arjuna slaps his own left thigh, before Bhīma's eyes. Bhīma understands this hint, and whilst his opponent is taking a leap preparatory to striking, Bhīma smashes his thigh, so that he breaks down like a tree uprooted by the storm. But Baladeva, who has been watching the fight, hurls angry words at Bhīma, accusing him of fighting *dishonestly*, for in an honest club fight it is forbidden to strike one's opponent below the navel. His brother Kṛṣṇa has some difficulty in restraining him from chastising Bhīma ; but in vain does Kṛṣṇa seek to persuade his brother by his sophistry that Bhīma has acted rightly. Honest Baladeva mounts his chariot in anger and drives away, promising that Bhīma shall always be known in the world as a dishonest fighter, but Duryodhana as an honest one.

Thereupon Yudhiṣṭhira sends Kṛṣṇa to Hastinapura to console and pacify Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī, and Kṛṣṇa performs his errand to the best of his ability. The Pāṇḍavas decide to spend the night outside the camp, on the bank of a river.

No sooner do Aśvatthāman and his two companions hear the news of the fall of Duryodhana, than they hasten to the scene of the fight, and lament the hero, who lies there with his thighs smashed. But Aśvatthāman swears that he will annihilate all the Pāṇḍavas, whereupon the dying Duryodhana solemnly appoints him commander-in-chief, though it is not quite obvious of what, as there is no army left.

*The Nocturnal Slaughter in the Camp of the Pāṇḍavas*¹

The three surviving Kaurava heroes, having taken leave of Duryodhana, have repaired to the shade of a tree at some distance from the field of battle, in order to spend the night there. Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman have fallen asleep, but Aśvatthāman is kept awake by rage and thirst for revenge. Then he sees a flock of crows nestling in the branches of the tree beneath which they are resting, and how suddenly, in the middle of the night, a dreadful-looking owl comes along and kills all the sleeping birds.² This sight suggests to him the idea of falling upon his foes in their sleep and murdering them. He awakens the two other heroes, and tells them of his plan. Kṛpa seeks to dissuade him, as it is wrong to fall upon the sleeping and the defenceless. Aśvatthāman, however, retorts that the Pāṇḍavas have long ago 'broken the bridge of right in a hundred fragments', that they need now only obey the dictates of revenge, and that no man living shall prevent him from carrying out his intention. "I shall kill the Pañcālas, the murderers of my father, in the sleep-time of night, even though I be reborn as a worm or as a winged insect for the

¹ This forms the contents of the *tenth* book (*Sauptikaparvan*).

² Cf. with this scene Th. Benfey, *Das Panchatantra* 1, pp. 336 ff.

deed !"¹ With this resolve, he mounts his chariot and drives to the hostile camp. Like a thief he creeps in, whilst the two other heroes keep guard at the gate of the camp, so as to kill any who might attempt fight. He breaks into the tent of Dhṛṣṭadyumna (who had killed his father) awakens him with a kick, and strangles him like a head of cattle. Then he passes like the god of death from tent to tent, from bed to bed, and murders without mercy all the sleeping and drowsy heroes, one after another, including the five sons of Draupadī, and Śikhaṇḍin. Before midnight all the warriors of the hostile army are dead. Thousands are wallowing in their gore. Rakṣasas and Piśācas, the flesh-eating demons who swarm in the night, come prowling into the camp in their multitudes, to feast on the flesh and blood of the murdered. When morning light appears, deathly stillness again reigns supreme far and wide over the camp.

But the three heroes hasten to the spot where the dying Duryodhana still lies, so as to tell him the news of the slaughter of the hostile warriors. When Duryodhana has heard what to him are glad tidings, he gives up the spirit gratefully and joyfully.

In the meantime Dhṛṣṭadyumna's charioteer, the only survivor, has secretly informed the Pāṇḍavas of the terrible news that their and Drupada's sons have been murdered and the entire host annihilated. Yudhiṣṭhira loses consciousness, and is only supported at some pains by his brothers. Then he sends for Draupadī and the other women of the family. He goes to the camp, and almost breaks down at the sight which meets his eyes. Then Draupadī approaches, and in her overwhelming sorrow for her murdered sons and brothers, she congratulates her husband Yudhiṣṭhira on his splendid victory in words of bitterest irony. But as boundless as her mourning is her hatred for the murderer Aśvatthāman, and she refuses to take nourishment until this fearful deed be avenged.

Whether and how, in the original epic, the deed of Aśvatthāman was avenged, is no longer evident from our *Mahābhārata*, owing to insertions and recastings. The following is related in a rather unintelligible and confused manner :

Bhīma pursues Aśvatthāman and fights with him, but really gets the worst of it. At all events he does not kill him, but Aśvatthāman voluntarily gives him a jewel desired by Draupadī, which has grown on his head. (There was never any previous mention of the remarkable head-ornament.) He is, moreover, in possession of a wonderful weapon, with which he destroys the last scion of the Kuru race, who is still lying in the womb of Uttarā, Arjuna's daughter-in-law, as an embryo ; for this

reason Uttarā later on gives birth to a dead child, which is, however, revived by Kṛṣṇa. This is *Parikṣit*, the father of that *Janamejaya*, at whose snake-sacrifice the *Mahābhārata* is supposed to have been first recited. But Kṛṣṇa pronounces a curse on Aśvatthāman, condemning him to wander about the world for three thousand years—a kind of Ahasuerus—alone, avoided by all human creatures, spreading the odour of blood and festering discharge, and laden with all diseases.

It is difficult to say whether any of all this belongs to the old poem. Certainly the lament for the dead still belonged to it.

*The Women's Lament for the Dead*¹

In vain do Sañjaya and Vidura endeavour to console the old, blind King Dhṛtarāṣṭra in his unspeakable grief. He breaks down again and again, and at length Vyāsa also comes to give him consolation. The funeral ceremonies for the dead must now, however, be performed. The king therefore sends for his consort Gāndhārī and the other ladies of the court, and, lamenting loudly, they wend their way out of the city towards the field of battle. On the way they meet the three surviving Kaurava heroes, who tell them of the terrible carnage which they have made in the night in the hostile camp. They do not stay, however, but make good their escape, as they fear the vengeance of the Pāṇḍavas. Soon afterwards, indeed, the five sons of Pāṇḍu come along with Kṛṣṇa, and fall in with the processions of the mourners. After some difficulty, Kṛṣṇa succeeds in effecting some kind of reconciliation between the Pāṇḍavas and the aged king and queen, though it is very difficult for Gāndhārī to forgive Bhīma who has not left alive a single one of her hundred sons. But Draupadī, too, has lost all her sons, and community of grief contributes towards the reconciliation.

Here follows the *Lament of Gāndhārī*, which is one of the most beautiful parts of the whole epic, as a masterpiece of elegiac poetry, as well as for the clear descriptions of the battlefield, recalling the pictures of a Wereschagin. The whole scene becomes so much the more impressive, owing to the fact that the poet does not himself tell the story, but lets the aged mother of heroes recount what she sees with her own eyes.²

¹ It forms the contents of the *eleventh* book (*Strīparvan*).

² Although it is expressly stated (XI, 16, 10 f.) that Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the women have arrived at Kurukṣetra and see the bloody battlefield before them, yet it is related



The procession of the mourners reaches the battlefield. Awful is the sight of the mangled corpses, around which birds of prey, jackals and flesh-eating demons swarm, whilst the mothers and wives of the fallen heroes wander about, lamenting, among the corpses. All this is seen by Gāndhārī who begins her lament addressed to Kṛṣṇa. She also spies Duryodhana, and painfully remembers how he had said farewell to her on the eve of battle. "He whom once lovely women cooled with their fans, is now fanned only by the birds of prey with their wings." But still more than at the sight of her valiant son, at the sight of all her hundred sons lying there in the dust but nevertheless assured of a place in heaven, she is moved with compassion toward her daughters-in-law who are running hither and thither among the corpses of their husbands and sons, in wild despair, and with their hair flying. She sees her intelligent son Vikarṇa lying, with dismembered limbs, in the midst of slain elephants—'as when the moon is surrounded by dark clouds in the autumnal sky'. Then she sees the youthful Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son, whose beauty even death has not been able entirely to destroy. His unfortunate young wife draws near to him, strokes him, removes his heavy armour, binds his bloody curls together, lays his head on her lap, and speaks to the dead hero in the tenderest words: she begs him to remember her sometimes, when he is taking delight in beautiful heavenly women in the divine regions. Then her gaze rests on Karṇa, the hero who had once been so much feared by all, and who now lies there like a tree brought low by the storm. Then she sees her son-in-law, the Sindhu king Jayadratha, whose wives vainly strive to chase the greedy birds of prey from the corpse, whilst her own daughter Duśśalā is seeking her husband's head amid lamentations. There, again, she sees Śalya, the Madra king, whose tongue is just being eaten by vultures, while his lamenting wives sit around him, 'like passionate female elephants around an elephant that has sunk into the mire'. She sees Bhīṣma, too, reposing on his bed of arrows—'this sun among men goes to his rest, as the sun sets in the sky'. And after she has lamented also for Droṇa and Drupada and all the great heroes who have fallen, she turns with angry words to Kṛṣṇa and reproaches him with not having prevented the annihilation of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. And she pronounces a curse upon him, that after thirty-six years he shall cause the destruction of his own race, and that he himself shall perish miserably in the wilderness.

Then Yudhiṣṭhira gives orders for the performance of the funeral ceremonies for all the fallen. Pyres are erected and butter and oil are

at the beginning of the canto that Gāndhārī, by her pious austerities, has received divine vision by the mercy of Vyāsa, enabling her to survey the battlefield from a great distance. This is certainly a feature which is foreign to the old poem, the clumsy idea of a later pedant.

poured over them. Sweet-scented woods and costly silk garments, broken chariots and weapons are burned with the corpses. After the rites and lamentations for the dead have been completed, at which the strangers and the friendless are not forgotten, they all repair to the bank of the Ganges, in order to offer the usual libations for the dead.

This is probably the point at which the old poem ended. Our *Mahābhārata* continues the story of the heroes.

*The Horse-sacrifice*¹

It is only on the occasion of the offering of the gifts to the departed, that Kuntī first tells her son Yudhiṣṭhira that Karna, too, was one of her sons, and asks him to offer the libation for Karna as his eldest brother. Yudhiṣṭhira is now sad, not only at having caused the downfall of so many relatives and friends, but at having been guilty even of fratricide to Karna. Inconsolable, he announces his intention of going into the forest and becoming an ascetic. In vain do his brothers and Kṛṣṇa endeavour to persuade him to take over the reins of government—he insists upon his resolve, until at length Vyāsa comes and advises him to offer a horse-sacrifice, thereby purging himself of all his sins. Yudhiṣṭhira acts on this advice. Arrangements are made for the great sacrifice. As required by the ritual, the sacrificial horse is let loose, to wander about at will for one year. Arjuna is selected to accompany and protect the horse. He follows the horse from land to land throughout the world. In these wanderings he has to fight many a battle, for everywhere he encounters tribes whose warriors have been defeated in the Kuru battle, and which take up a hostile attitude towards him. He performs feats of great heroism, but avoids unnecessary bloodshed as far as possible, and invites all the defeated kings to the horse-sacrifice. At the end of a year he returns with the sacrificial horse to Hastināpura, where he is received amid great rejoicings. Now the sacrificial feast begins, and all the invited kings flock in. The horse is killed with exact observance of all the sacrificial requirements and is sacrificed in the fire. The Pāṇḍavas breathe the smoke of the burnt marrow, whereby all their sins are made as nought. After the completion of the sacrifice, Yudhiṣṭhira presents Vyāsa with 'the whole earth'. The latter generously returns the gift to him, and exhorts him to give the priests much gold. After Yudhiṣṭhira has accordingly given away vast quantities of gold to the priests, he is free of his sins, and thenceforward rules his kingdom as a good and pious king.

¹ This forms the contents of the *fourteenth* book (*Aśvamedhikaparvan*). Regarding Books XII and XIII see below.



Dhṛtarāṣṭra's End

The old king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,¹ as head of the family, is still consulted on all matters, and he and his consort Gāndhārī are always held in high esteem. Thus the old king still lives for fifteen years at the court of Yudhiṣṭhira in the best understanding with the Pāṇḍavas, which is only spoilt to some extent by the king's relation to Bhīma. The king could never find it in his heart entirely to forgive this man who had robbed him of all his sons, and the defiant Bhīma hurt his aged uncle's feelings only too often by his unseemly speech. Thus after fifteen years the aged king resolved to retire into the forest as a hermit. Yudhiṣṭhira consented only unwillingly. But Kṛṣṇa says that it has always been the custom for pious kings to end their days either as a warrior on the field of battle or else as a hermit in the forest. Thus Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī go forth into the forest, and Kuntī, Sañjaya and Vidura join them. After a time the Pāṇḍavas visit their relatives in the forest hermitage, just as the sage Vidura is dying. Two years later the Pāṇḍavas receive the news that Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī have lost their lives in a forest fire, whilst Sañjaya has gone to the Himālayas.

The Destruction of Kṛṣṇa and His Race²

Thirty-six years after the great battle in the Kuru field the Pāṇḍavas receive the sad news that Gāndhārī's curse³ has come true, and that Kṛṣṇa has perished with all his race. At a drinking bout the chiefs of two clans fall to quarrelling in which they are soon joined by others. A general club fight ensues, Kṛṣṇa transforming sedges into clubs, and the men of the Yādava clans kill each other. Kṛṣṇa looks around for his brother Baladeva, but is just in time to witness his dying hour. A white snake runs out of Baladeva's mouth, and hastens to the ocean,⁴ where it is received by the most famous snake demons. Then Kṛṣṇa lies down in the desolate forest, and becomes absorbed in deep meditation. Here he is mistaken by a hunter named Jarā (i.e., 'Old Age') for an antelope, and is shot and killed by an arrow in the sole of his foot, the only spot at which he is vulnerable.

¹ Here begins the *fifteenth* book (*Āśramavāsikaparvan*).

² Related in the *sixteenth* book (*Mausalaparvan*).

³ See above, p. 326.

⁴ A beautiful example of the idea of the soul assuming the form of a snake prevalent among so many peoples. In the German legend, too, of King Guntram, the soul, in the form of a snake, issues out of the mouth of the sleeping king into a hill.

*The Last Journey of the Pāṇḍavas*

The Pāṇḍavas are inconsolable for the death of their faithful friend, and soon afterwards they resolve to go forth upon their last journey.¹ Yudhiṣṭhira appoints Parikṣit as king, and says farewell to his subjects. Then the five brothers and their wife Draupadī, all clothed in garments of bast, and accompanied only by a dog, wander forth to the Himālayas which they ascend, and reach the divine mountain Meru. On the way to heaven Draupadī first falls dead, then Sahadeva, next Nakula, soon afterwards Arjuna, and lastly Bhīma. Then Indra comes driving in his celestial chariot, to fetch Yudhiṣṭhira to heaven.² The latter, however, does not wish to accompany him, as he does not desire to dwell in heaven without his brothers. Then Indra promises him that he shall see his brothers as well as Draupadī again in heaven. But Yudhiṣṭhira also insists upon his dog entering heaven as well, and this Indra will not allow under any circumstances. At length the dog reveals himself as the god Dharma, and evinces his great satisfaction at Yudhiṣṭhira's faithfulness. Thus they reach heaven, but Yudhiṣṭhira by no means wants to stay there, as he does not see either his brothers or Draupadī. Now when he even³ sees Duryodhana seated upon a heavenly throne, and honoured by all, he has had enough of heaven, and demands to be conducted to the worlds where his brothers and heroes like Karna are. Then the gods give him a messenger to accompany him to hell, where he sees the terrible tortures of the damned. He is already turning away from this awful sight, when he hears voices imploring him to stay, as a beneficent breath of air emanates from him. Full of pity he asks the tortured souls who they are, and he is informed that they are his brothers and friends. Then he is seized by pain and anger at the injustice of Fate, and he sends the messenger back to the gods to tell them that he will not go to heaven, but will remain in hell. But soon the gods come down to him, and Indra explains to him that those who have sinned most are sent first to heaven and then to hell, whereas those who have only committed a few sins, atone for these rapidly in hell, and then enjoy eternal blessedness in heaven. He himself had to visit hell first, owing to his having deceived Droṇa, and in the same way his brothers and friends had to be purged of their sins in hell. Soon, however,

¹ With this begins the *seventeenth* book (*Mahāprasthānikaparvan*).

² In an essay *Points de contact entre Mahābhārata et le Shāh-nāmāh* (JA. s. 8 t. X. 1887, pp. 38 ff., cf. JBRAS., 17, Proceed., pp. ii ff.) J. Darmesteter has compared Yudhiṣṭhira's ascent to heaven with the disappearance of Kai Khosru in the Persian heroic epic. Kai Khosru, too, climbs a high mountain and reaches heaven in the flesh. Like Yudhiṣṭhira's brothers, the Pehlevans (heroes) accompanying Kai Khoṣru, also perish on the way. Nevertheless the two episodes are fundamentally so different that I cannot believe in any connection. Cf. also Barth in RHR., t. 19, 1889, pp. 162 ff.).

³ Here begins the *eighteenth* (last) book (*Svargārohanaparvan*).



all the horror of hell vanishes; they all find themselves in heaven, and assume the form of gods.¹

This principal story, which has here been briefly sketched, constitutes not quite one-half of the eighteen books of the *Mahābhārata*.² The other half consists of those parts of the work, partly narrative and partly didactic, which have no bearing, or only a very slight one, on the conflict of the Kauravas and the Pāṇdavas. An account of this will be given in the following chapters.

ANCIENT HEROIC POETRY IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

Among the tasks of the ancient Indian bards was also that of tracing the genealogical trees of the kings, or, if necessary, of inventing them. Genealogical verses (*anuvamśa-sloka*) therefore form an essential part of the old heroic poetry. And the first book of the *Mahābhārata* contains a whole section, entitled *Sambhavadparvan* or section of the origins, in which the genealogy of the heroes is traced back to their first ancestors who were descended from the gods, and many interesting legends about these old kings of ancient times are related. Of course, among these ancestors of the Kauravas and Pāṇdavas belonging to the Bhārata race, that *Bhārata* is not missing, from whom the *Mahābhārata* itself has derived its name. Bhārata is the son of King Duryodhana and of Sakuntalā, so famous from the drama of Kālidāsa, and whose story is also told in the *Sambhavadparvan*.

Unfortunately, however, this very *Sakuntalā episode* of the *Mahābhārata*³ has been handed down to us in a much

¹ Cf. with this episode the legend of Vipāścit in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (below) and see also L. Scherman, *Materialien zur Geschichte der indischen Visionsliteratur*, Leipzig, 1892, pp. 48 ff.

² The eighteen parvas or books of the *Mahābhārata* contain together 2,109 Adhyāyas or cantos (in the Bombay edition); of these about 1,000 deal with the principal narrative.

³ I, 68-75. An English translation of the *Sakuntalā* episode by Charles Wilkins appeared as early as 1794 in A. Dalrymple's *Oriental Repository* and separately (London, 1795); a French translation by A. Chézy as an appendix to his edition of Kālidāsa's *Sakuntalā* drama (Paris, 1830); German translations by B. Hirzel (1833), A. F. Graf von Schack (1877, *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 32 ff.), J. J. Meyer, *Das Weib im altindischen*

deteriorated and probably also mutilated, from which seems to have retained only a few features of the old heroic poem and could hardly have formed the prototype of Kalidāsa's poem. The descriptions of the forest, the chase and the hermitages, are spun out not to epic but to pedantic length partly after the pattern of the later ornate poetry. The story itself is unattractive and has no artistic basis. The fact that Śakuntalā is not acknowledged by the king is not accounted for, as in Kalidāsa's play, by a curse and the story of the lost ring, but by the king's desire to remove every doubt, on the part of his courtiers, as to the genuineness of the royal birth of his son. Therefore he provokes, as it were, a divine judgment. He pretends not to know Śakuntalā, and refuses to acknowledge his son, until a heavenly voice announces, before the whole court, that Śakuntalā has spoken the truth and that her child is really the son of King Duśyanta. Here we meet the two verses which we know for certain belong to the oldest part of the Śakuntalā poem and are taken from the old bard poetry.¹

"The mother is but the leathern bag (for the preservation of the seed) it is to the father that the child belongs; the son, whom he has begotten, is himself.* Cherish² thy son, Duśyanta, do not scorn Śakuntalā!

A son, O King, who begets offspring again, leads (the fathers) up (to heaven) out of Yama's abode. And thou art the creator of this seed, Śakuntalā has spoken the truth.

There are very probably also many old and genuine verses preserved in the dialogue between Śakuntalā who stands up for her rights and those of her son, and the king who does not wish to acknowledge her. In any case a dialogue

Epos, pp. 68 ff., and W. Porzig (*Indische Erzähler*, Vol. 12, Leipzig, 1923, pp. 50 ff.). The Kumbhakonam edition has enlarged and spoiled the traditional text still more, s. M. Winternitz, *Ind. Ant.*, 1898, p. 136; W. Meyer, *Ind. Ant.*, 1904, p. 76 note, and Porzig, *loc. cit.*, 123 ff.

¹ This is proved by their repeated occurrence, for we find the same verses (I, 74, 109 f.) quoted again as 'genealogical verses' (*anuvamśaślokan*) in the *Mahābhārata* (I, 95, 29 f.), and they recur in the *Harivaṃśa* (32, 10 ff.), *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (IV, 19), *Vāyu-Purāṇa* (99, 135 f. *ĀnSS* ed.), *Matsya-Purāṇa* (49, 12 f. *ĀnSS* ed.) and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (IX, 20, 21 f.).

² Cf. the verses translated above, on pp. 184 f.

³ Because of this word 'cherish' (*bhara*), the boy received the name *Bhārata*.

of this kind must have formed one of the principal parts of the old narrative, and moralising maxims, like the following beautiful verse, may have occurred in Śakuntalā's speech :

"None sees me : so when bent on sin,
The fool imagines, madly bold ;
For gods his evil deeds behold ;
The soul, too, sees the man within."¹

Śakuntalā also probably spoke of the happiness and blessing which a son brings to his father, as in the verses :

"He himself has begotten himself again as a son,² thus say the wise ones. Therefore shall a man look upon his wife, the mother of his sons, as upon his own mother."

"Is there any higher blessedness than to see the little son return from play, covered with dust, and run to embrace his father's knees ?"

"He has sprung from thy loins, from one soul another soul has sprung forth. Behold thy son, like a second self in a lake clear as a mirror !"³

Yet it is not probable that *all* the beautiful sayings which are placed in the mouth of Śakuntalā really belonged to the old heroic poem, sayings which deal with the happiness of marriage, and the duties of husband and wife, with paternal duties, and with truthfulness. Some of the verses, which refer to matrimonial laws and right of succession and which have been taken directly from the legal literature, rather indicate that Brahmanical *scholars* utilised the speeches of Śakuntalā for the purpose of bringing in as many sentences as possible on morality and law. This does not prevent our finding in these very speeches some of the most magnificent examples of Indian gnomic poetry, like the following :

"A wife is half the man, transcends
In value far all other friends.
She every earthly blessing brings,
And even redemption from her springs."

¹ I, 74, 17. Translated by J. Muir, *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers*, p. 8.

² Similarly *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* VII, 13 ; cf. above, pp. 184 f.

³ I, 74, 47 ; 52 ; 64.

"In lonely hours, companions bright,
These charming women give delight ;
Like fathers wise, in duty tried,
To virtuous acts they prompt and guide.
Whene'er we suffer pain and grief,
Like mothers kind they bring relief."

"The weary man whom toils oppress,
When travelling through life's wilderness,
Finds in his spouse a place of rest,
And there abides, refreshed and blest."¹

Among the ancestors of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* a king *Yayāti* is mentioned, whose history is also related in the 'Sambhavaparvan', the section of the genealogical bard-poetry.² But just as the old *Śakuntalā* poem was utilised for the purpose of pointing Brahmanical teachings on law and morality, so also the old *Yayāti* legend, which seems originally to have been a kind of Titan legend, was transformed into a moral narrative, whereby it became a popular subject for ascetic poetry. However, the traces of the old heroic poetry are by no means entirely effaced ; they are discernible particularly in a certain racy humour, with which the story of the two wives of the king is related. Out of the contents of the *Yayāti* episode only the following extract can be given :

Devayānī, daughter of the Asura priest *Śukra*, has been insulted by *Śarmiṣṭhā*, daughter of the Asura king. For this reason the priest wishes to leave the king. Now the latter, in order to appease the priest, gives his daughter to *Devayānī* as her handmaiden. Soon afterwards *Devayānī* becomes the wife of King *Yayāti*, who has to promise to have no intercourse with her 'servant', Princess *Śarmiṣṭhā*. But the king breaks his promise, marries *Śarmiṣṭhā* secretly, and begets three sons with her. Jealous *Devayānī* finds it out, and complains to her father *Śukra*. The

¹ I, 74, 40, 42 ; 49 translated by J. Muir, *loc. cit.*, pp. 134 f.

² The story is first told briefly in I, 75, then repeated with many details in I, 76-93. The last part of the legend, with a few additions, is then told once again in V, 120-123. The episode has been translated into German by A. Holtzmann (*Indische Sagen*), J. J. Meyer (*Das Weib im altindischen Epos*, pp. 8 ff.) and W. Porzig (*Indische Erzähler*, Vol. 12, pp. 12 ff.). On the different versions of the story in Sanskrit literature, s. Porzig, *loc. cit.*, pp. 105 ff. On a mythological interpretation of the legend s. A. Ludwig in *Sitzungsberichte der K. böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Prague, 1898.



latter pronounces a curse upon Yayāti that he shall immediately lose his youth and become old and decrepit : however, at the request of Yayāti, he tones the curse down inasmuch as Yayāti may transfer his old age to someone else.

Now Yayāti, after having become suddenly old and wrinkled and grey, asks his sons, one after the other, to relieve him of his old age and to give him their youth, as he has not yet enjoyed life sufficiently. None of the elder sons will agree to this exchange, whereupon they are cursed by their father. Only the youngest, Pūru, declares his willingness. He relieves his father of the burden of old age and gives him his own youth in exchange. Then Yayāti rejoiced in another thousand years of the most blooming youth, and enjoyed the pleasures of life to the very full. Not only did he take delight in his two wives, but also in a heavenly nymph, the beautiful Apsaras Viśvācī ('gracious to all'). But however much he enjoyed, he was never fully satisfied. And when the thousand years had elapsed, he came to the conclusion as expressed in the following verses:

"Truly, desire is not satisfied by the gratification of desires ;
Nay, it grows and waxes stronger, as the fire fed by

sacrificial ghee.

The earth filled with treasures, gold, cattle and women too,
Is not enough for one man :—think on this, and seek thy
soul's contentment.

Only he who has never wrought evil to any creature,
In thought, word or deed, only he may dwell with the
Brahman.

He who is unafraid, and who is feared by no creature,
Who has no desires and knows no hate, only he may
dwell with the Brahman."¹

Then he returned his son Pūru his youth, took up the burden of his own old age, and after having instated Pūru on the throne, repaired to the forest, where he lived as a hermit, practising the severest austerities for a thousand years. On the strength of this he attained to heaven, where he lived for a long time, honoured by all the gods and saints. One

¹ I, 75, 49-52. Only the first verse recurs literally in all the other places where the Yayāti legend is related. (It also occurs in Manu II, 94.) The remaining verses are found again with variations in I, 85, 12-16, *Harivaṃśa* 30, 1639-1645, *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* IV, 10, *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* IX, 19, 13-15. But only in I, 75, 51-52 and *Harivaṃśa* 30, 1642 is there any talk of union with the Brahman in the sense of the Vedānta philosophy. In all other places the corresponding verses only talk of the curbing of desires as the worthy aim of the morality of asceticism, and this morality is the same for Buddhists and Jainas as for the Brahmanical and Viṣṇuite ascetics. Hence we find quite similar sayings amongst all Indian sects which practise asceticism.

day, however, he boasted during a conversation with Indra, and was cast out from heaven for this offence. Later on, however, he returns to heaven with his four pious grandchildren.

The legend of Nahuṣa, the father of Yayāti, which is related in the *Mahābhārata* several times,¹ is also a kind of Titan legend, which ends with a fall from heaven :

Nahuṣa, a grandson of the Purūravas of Vedic fame,² was a mighty king, who annihilated the robber bands (*dasyusamghātān*). But he levied taxes on the ṛṣis, too, and commanded them to carry him on their backs, like beasts of burden. He even overpowered the gods, and ruled the heavens for a long time in Indra's stead. He desired Indra's wife Śacī as his wife, and grew so overbearing that he yoked the divine ṛṣis to his chariot, treading on Agastya's head. Now this was a bit too much for this great saint, and he cursed Nahuṣa, with the consequence that he fell out of heaven and was obliged to live on the earth as a snake for ten thousand years.³

Some of the poems which have found admission into the *Mahābhārata* are of such proportions, and form a complete whole to such an extent, that we can speak of them as epics within the epic. Of this kind is above all the rightly famous poem of *Nala and Damayanti*.⁴ While the Pāṇḍavas are in banishment in the forest they receive a visit from the Ṛṣi Bhadaśva. Yudhiṣṭhira complains to him of his own misfortune and that of his people, and asks him the question whether there has ever been a more unfortunate king than himself. Thereupon Bhadaśva relates the story of the unfortunate King Nala, who loses all his possessions and his kingdom in a game of dice with his brother Puṣkara, and then goes forth into the forest as an exile with his beautiful and faithful wife Damayanti; pursued and blinded still further by the wicked demon of gambling, he deserts his faithful wife in the midst of the forest, while she lies deep in slumber,

¹ First in I, 75 as an introduction to the Yayāti episode, then in greater detail in V, 11-17, in a short extract also XII, 342 and XIII, 100. A free poetical adaptation by A. Holtzmann, *Indische Sagen* I, pp. 9-30.

² Purūravas too (cf. above, 90 f., 182 f.) was like Nahuṣa, according to the *Mahābhārata* (I, 75, 20 ff.) an enemy of the priests, oppressing the ṛṣis and being annihilated by their curse.

³ He was then redeemed by Yudhiṣṭhira (III, 179 f.), see above, p. 307.

⁴ III, 52-79 : *Nalopākhyāna*.



fatigued from her wanderings. The adventures of King Nala, and of Damayanti, deserted by her husband, how they wander about in the forest separated from each other, how Damayanti, after much sorrow and hardship, obtains a friendly reception from the queen-mother of Cedi, how Nala, after the snake-king Karkoṭaka has made him irreconisable, serves King R̥tuparna as charioteer and cook, until finally the husband and wife, after a long and painful separation, are reunited in love, all this is related in the touchingly simple, genuinely popular, tone of the fairy tale, which also is not lacking in humour.

Since the year 1819 when Franz Bopp first published this poem of King Nala, together with a Latin translation, it is recognised as one of the gems of Indian literature, nay more, as one of the gems of universal literature. Bopp's edition and translation of the poem was welcomed by A. W. v. Schlegel¹ with the words : "I will only say that, in my estimation, this poem can hardly be surpassed in pathos and ethos, in the enthralling force and tenderness of the sentiments. It is made expressly to attract old and young, the high-born and the lowly, the connoisseurs and those who are merely guided by instinct. Also, the fairy-tale is tremendously popular in India,.....there the courageous constancy and devotion of Damayanti is equally famous as that of Penelope amongst us ; and in Europe, the gathering-place of the productions of all continents and all ages, it deserves to become equally so." And indeed it has become so. The German poet Friedrich Rückert, that past master in the art of translation, rendered the poem into German verse in the year 1828² with his incomparable talent, making it as popular in Germany as it has become famous in England by means of Dean H. H. Milman's version.³

Nala Naiṣadha, the hero of the narrative, is surely no other than the Naḍa Naiṣidha, mentioned in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*,

¹ *Indische Bibliothek*, I, 98 f.

² New editions appeared in 1838, 1845, 1862 and 1873. A very free poetical rendering was given by A. Holtzmann in his *Indische Sagen*.

³ *Nala and Damayanti and other Poems*, translated from the Sanskrit into English verse, Oxford, 1835.

of whom it is there said, that 'day after day he bears Yama (the god of death) to the South'. He must therefore have lived at that time, and undertaken warlike expeditions towards the South. The name of the hero thus indicates high antiquity. The poem itself probably belongs among the old parts of the *Mahābhārata*, though not among the oldest. In any case it is free from all purāṇa-like accessories, and only the old Vedic gods, like Varuṇa and Indra, are mentioned, but not Viṣṇu or Śiva. The state of civilisation, too, described in the poem is, on the whole, quite simple and has the appearance of antiquity. On the other hand, we find hardly anywhere in the oldest poetry such delicacy and so much romance in the representation of courtship and of love itself, as especially in the first cantos of the Nala poem. Only the very ancient poem of the love of Purūravas and Urvaśi allows us to suspect that love-romance was no stranger to India even in the most ancient times. But how very congenial romance is to the Indian mind in general, is proved by the enormous popularity of this poem, which has again and again been imitated by later poets, in Sanskrit as well as in modern Indian languages and dialects.¹ Few Indian poems also suit European taste so extremely well as the Nala poem. It has been translated into practically all the languages of Europe,² and a dramatic adaptation by A. de Gubernatis was even produced on the stage in Florence in 1869. And since a long time it has been the custom, at almost all Western universities, to begin the study of Sanskrit with the reading of this poem, for which purpose it is excellently adapted in language as well as contents.³

The Rāma⁴ episode, too, is a kind of epic within an epic. But while the Nala poem (in spite of some disfiguring

¹ Cf. the enumeration in A. Holtzmann. *Das Mahabharata* II, 69 ff.

² A. Holtzmann, *loc. cit.*, II, 73 ff. mentions translations into German, English, French, Italian, Swedish, Czech, Polish, Russian, Modern Greek and Hungarian. I will only mention the translation into English by Monier Williams (1860). Charles Bruce (1864), Edwin Arnold (*Indian Idylls*, 1883, *Poetical Works*, 1885); into German by E. Lobedanz (1863), H. C. Kellner (in *Reclams Universalbibliothek*), L. Fritze (1914); into French by S. Lévi (Paris, 1920 in *Les classiques de l'orient*, Paris, 1920).

³ The text of the Nala story has often been published, with glossary and notes, for beginners in Sanskrit, e.g., by G. Bühler (*Third Book of Sanskrit*, Bombay, 2nd Ed. 1877). Monier Williams (London, 1879). J. Eggeling (London, 1913) H. C. Kellner (Leipzig, 1885), W. Caland (Utrecht, 1917).

⁴ III, 273-290 : *Rāmopākhyāna*.



additions and insertions, from which indeed *no* part of the *Mahābhārata* is quite free) is a work of art and a valuable survival of the ancient bard-poetry, the narrative of Rāma has only a purely literary significance for the history of the second great epic of the Indians, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. For the Rāma episode can scarcely be regarded as anything but a rather inartistically abridged rendering of either the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself,¹ or of those heroic songs from which Vālmiki composed his great poem. In no case is it these oldest heroic songs of Rāma themselves, which we find in the *Mahābhārata*. The Rāma episode is related by the Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya to console Yudhiṣṭhira, who is much depressed on account of the rape of Draupadī²; for Rāma's wife, too, Sītā, was abducted, and was held in captivity for a long time by the demon Rāvaṇa. References to the Rāma legend are not rare in other parts of the *Mahābhārata* either. I point out only the meeting of Bhīma with the monkey Hanumat.³

A much more valuable remnant of ancient Indian bard-poetry, unfortunately preserved only as a fragment, is found in the fifth book of the *Mahābhārata*. It is the episode of the *hero-mother Vidulā*.⁴ Kuntī sends a message by Kṛṣṇa to her sons, the Pāṇḍavas, telling them not to forget their duty as warriors,⁵ and on this occasion relates how the warrior's wife Vidulā once urged her son Sañjaya on to fight. The latter was quite discouraged after a shameful defeat which he had suffered at the hands of the king of the Sindhus, and lived with his wife and his mother Vidulā in

¹ H. Jacobi [*Das Rāmāyaṇa*, (Bonn, 1893) pp. 71. ff.] has given such good reasons for this assumption that it seems to me the most probable one, in spite of the objections of A. Ludwig, *Über das Rāmāyaṇa und die Beziehungen desselben zum Mahābhārata*, pp. 30 ff., and Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 63 f. Cf. also A. Weber, *Über das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 34 ff.

² See above, p. 308. Probably this story of the rape of Draupadī is itself only a clumsy imitation of the stealing of Sītā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

³ Above, p. 306.

⁴ V, 133-136: *Vidulāputrānuśāsana*. Cf. H. Jacobi, *Über ein verlorenes Helden-gedicht der Sindhu-Sauvira* (in 'Mélanges Kern', Leyden, 1903, pp. 53 ff.). A free poetical rendering of the poem is given by J. Muir, *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers*, pp. 120-133. He justly refers to the women of Rājputānā who "maintain in more recent times the character of heroism ascribed to Vidulā in this passage of the *Mahābhārata*", *loc. cit.*, p. 132).

⁵ See above, p. 314.



misery. Then, in extremely forceful language Vidula reproaches him with his cowardice and inactivity, and with fiery words spurs him on to new deeds of heroism. In order to give an idea of the racy vigour of the language of this fragment of ancient heroic poetry, I give a few verses from this speech in literal prose translation :¹

"Up, coward ! Lie not there so idle, when thou hast suffered defeat, to the joy of thy foes, to the sorrow of thy friends !"

"A shallow brooklet is soon filled, the fist of a mouse is easy to fill. The coward is soon satisfied, he is contented even with little."

"Die not like a cur before thou hast at least robbed the serpent of its fangs ! Be brave, though it cost thee thy life !"

"Why liest thou there like a dead man, like one who has been struck by lightning ? Up, coward ! Sleep not, when thou hast been defeated by the foe !"

"Flare up like a torch of tinduka wood,² though it be but for a moment, but smother not like a fire of chaff, just to prolong life !"

"Better flare up for a moment than smother for hours ! O that a mild ass should have been born in a royal house !"

"That man whose deeds do not form the subject of tales of wonder, serves but to increase the great heap, he is neither woman nor man."³

To all the admonitions and reproaches of his mother, the son, who is sharply characterised by his short speeches, has only the reply that he lacks the means for a victorious battle, and that, in any case, his death would not benefit her :

"Thou hast a hard, an iron heart,
And play'st no loving mother's part,—
True daughter of a warrior line ;
A fierce unbending soul is thine.
To all thy Kshatriya instincts true,
Thou dost not yield to love its due ;
Nor seek to guard me as thy one
Supreme delight, thine only son !
But spurr'st me on, devoid of ruth,—
As if I were an alien youth,—

¹ The translation by Muir, *loc. cit.*, pp. 121 f. gives no sufficient idea of the raciness of the original.

² Tinduka, the *Diospyros embryopteris* tree.

³ V, 132, 8-10, 12, 15, 22.



To join again in hopeless strife,
 And all in vain to peril life.
 What worth would earth, its wealth, its joys
 Its power, its state, its glittering toys,—
 What worth would life—possess for thee,
 My mother, if thou hadst not me ?”¹

But his mother always answers him again with fresh exhortations, that a warrior may not know fear, and must in any case fulfil his duty as a warrior. And at last she succeeds in rousing her son, ‘even though he had little intelligence’.

“Like a noble steed when it is chastised, the son, goaded by the shafts of his mother’s words, did all she asked of him.”²

This torso of a heroic poem is one of the few portions of the *Mahābhārata* which have remained almost entirely untouched by brahmanical influence. Only too often has the old bard-poetry, which was inspired by the warrior-spirit, been quite watered down in form and contents under the influence of the Brahmin scholars. Thus we find—this is one of the many instances—an ‘old itihāsa’ quoted in the twelfth book of the *Mahābhārata*, which Nārada relates to Śrījaya, in order to console him after the death of his son. Many kings of primitive times are named, who all had to die, though they were famous heroes. But of what do the ‘heroic deeds’ of these kings consist ? They offered countless sacrifices, and what was still more important, gave enormous presents to the priests. One king, for example, gives the priests as sacrificial gift ‘a thousand times a thousand’ maidens adorned with gold, each of whom sits on a four-horse chariot ; each chariot is accompanied by a hundred elephants garlanded with gold ; behind each elephant follow a thousand horses, and behind each horse a thousand cows, behind each cow a thousand goats and sheep.³ It is often

¹ V, 134, 1-3. Translated by J. Muir, *loc. cit.*, pp. 127 f.

² V, 135, 12 ; 16.

³ XII, 29. A similar list of ancient kings who were noted for their generosity is to be found in VII, 56-71.

difficult to say whether they are remnants of ancient heroic poetry, spoilt through the priests' attempts at recasting, or independent brahmanical compositions.

BRAHMANICAL MYTHS AND LEGENDS IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

The fact that the old Indian bard-poetry has not been preserved in its pure originality is due to the circumstance that the Brahmans took possession of the *Mahābhārata*. To the same circumstance, however, we are indebted for the preservation in the *Mahābhārata* not only of numerous myths of gods, and legends, important for the history of mythology and tradition, but also of some remarkable creations of Brahmanical poetic art and valuable specimens of Brahmanical wisdom.

Interesting from the point of view of mythology and tradition is the frame-story of the Snake sacrifice of Janamejaya,¹ into which there is again interwoven a tangle of stories, snakelegends, myths of the bird Garuḍa and others. But what is here called '*Snake-sacrifice*' is in reality a snake-charm, *i.e.*, an exorcism for the annihilation of snakes. Janamejaya's father, Parikṣit, had been bitten to death by the snake-king Takṣaka. In order to avenge the death of his father, King Janamejaya arranges a great sacrifice,² at which all the snakes of the earth are compelled, by the exorcisms of the priests, to come from near and far and cast themselves into the fire. This is described in our epic with great vividness :

"The sacrificial ceremonial now began in accordance with the prescribed rules for the snake-sacrifice. Hither and thither hurried the priests,

¹ I, 3, 13-58; XV, 35. Freely rendered in German verses by A. Holtzmann, *Indische Sagen*; literally translated into German prose by W. Porzig (*Indische Erzähler*, Vol. 15, Leipzig, 1924). Similar legends also exist in Europe, especially in the Tyrol; cf. my treatise *Das Schlangenopfer des Mahābhārata* (in '*Kulturgeschichtliches aus der Tierwelt*, Festschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde und Linguistik', Prague, 1904).

² The *Mahābhārata* is supposed to have been recited in the intervals of the sacrifice. See above, p. 284. Porzig (*loc. cit.*) suggests that the Āstikaparvan was originally much more closely connected with the *Mahābhārata* as a frame-story, and that it was not Vaiṣampāyana, but Āstika himself who related the whole of the *Mahābhārata*, and thereby saved the snake-king Takṣaka. There are but very weak grounds for this hypothesis. It is more probable that the whole of the Āstikaparvan was originally an independent poem, which was only later connected with the recitation of the *Mahābhārata*. Cf. V. Venkatachellam Iyer, *Notes of a Study of the Preliminary Chapters of the Mahābhārata*, Madras, 1922, pp. 352 ff.



each one eagerly fulfilling his appointed task. Wrapped in black garments, their eyes inflamed by the smoke, they poured the sacrificial ghee into the blazing fire, whilst saying the incantations. They caused the hearts of all snakes to quake, and called them all forth into the jaws of the fire. Then the snakes fell into the flaming furnace, distorting their bodies and calling piteously on one another. Palpitating and hissing, embracing one another with their heads and their tails, they hurled themselves in their masses into the brightly glowing fire.....great snakes and small snakes, many, of many colours, terrible biters of mighty strength as that of a club, snakes full of venom ; driven by the curse of the mother, the snakes fell into the fire.”¹

With this legend of the snake-sacrifice, the ancient myth of Kadrū and Vinatā, occurring already in Vedic texts,² is here combined. Kadrū, ‘the red-brown one’, is the earth and the mother of the snakes, Vinatā, ‘the curved one’, is the vault of heaven and the mother of the mythical bird Garuḍa. And there is also interwoven the myth of the *twirling of the ocean*,³ which occurs also in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in the *Purāṇas*, and is again and again related, or used for purposes of illustration and comparison by poets of later times. How gods and demons, united in ardent labour, twirl the ocean in order to obtain the draught of immortality, the mountain Mandara serving as a twirling-stick and the snake-prince Vāsuki as a rope, how the moon then arises out of the foaming mass, then Lakṣmī, the goddess of good fortune and of beauty, the intoxicating drink Surā and other precious things, until at last the beautiful god Dhanvantari, holding the draught of immortality in a shining white goblet, appears from out of the ocean,—all this is described, if one may say so, with ‘life-like’ graphicness.

One more of the snake-legends interwoven into the framestory deserves mentioning, namely, the story of Ruru partly only a duplicate of the legend of the snake-sacrifice itself, for, like Janamejaya, Ruru vows to annihilate all snakes. This happens as follows :

¹ I, 52.

² *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* VI, 1, 6, 1 ; Kāthaka, 23, 10 : *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* III, 6, 2. The myth of Kadrū and Vinatā from the Āstikaparvan translated by J. Charpentier, *Die Suparṇasage*, pp. 167 ff. On the same myth in the *Suparṇādhyāya* s. above, pp. 274 f.

³ I, 17-19.

Ruru, son of a Brahman, once saw the lovely virgin Pramadvarā, daughter of an Apsaras, and was seized with love for her. She becomes his bride, but a few days before the wedding, she is bitten by a poisonous snake while she is at play. She lies there lifeless, as though asleep, more lovely than ever. All the pious hermits approach, and, moved by pity, burst into tears, but Ruru goes forth into the depth of the forest in his sorrow. Lamenting loudly, he invokes the gods to have regard to his penance and his pious life, and to give his beloved back to him. Then a messenger from the gods appears, and announces that Pramadvarā can only be recalled to life if Ruru will yield half of his own life for her. Ruru agrees at once, and the King of law, *i.e.*, the god of death, gives his consent for Pramadvarā to be recalled to life. Soon afterwards, on a happy day, the two are wedded. Now Ruru vowed to destroy all the snakes in the world, and thenceforth, whenever he saw a snake, he killed it. But one day he happened on a non-poisonous snake, which asked him to spare it. It was in reality a ṛṣi who was compelled to live as a snake in consequence of a curse, and who was now released from the curse by his meeting with Ruru. In his human form he admonishes him to desist from destroying living creatures.¹

Ruru, the hero of this legend, is a descendant of that *Cyavana*, of whom it is already related in the *R̥gveda*,² that the *Aśvins* made him young again. The story of this rejuvenation is told in detail in the *Brāhmaṇas*,³ and a version of the legend is to be found in the *Mahābhārata* too.⁴ It is instructive to compare the Vedic form of the legend with that in the epic. I, therefore, give below the contents according to the *Mahābhārata*, and draw attention in the notes to the most important deviations of the *Brāhmaṇa* narratives.

Cyavana, a son of *Bhṛgu*, practised severe austerity on the shore of a lake. He stood motionless as a post for so long that a mound of earth formed over him, on which the ants crawled about, and he himself looked

¹ Extract from I, 8-12.

² *R̥v.* I, 116, 10, where he is called *Cyavana*.

³ *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* IV, 1, 5. Translated into German by A. Weber *Indische Streifen* I (Berlin, 1868), pp. 13 ff. *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa*, III, 120 f. Cf. the interesting study of E. W. Hopkins, *The Fountain of Youth* (*JAOS.*, Vol. XXVI, 1905, pp. 1-67, and 411 ff.), in which the legend of the fountain of youth is traced not only in India, but also among other peoples.

⁴ III, 122-125. References to the last part of the narrative also XII, 342; XIII, 156 and XIV, 9.

like an ant-hill.¹ Into the neighbourhood of this lake King Śaryāti once came with many followers. His young daughter Sukanyā, romping about in the forest with her playmates, came upon the ant-hill, in which only the two eyes of the ascetic were visible like glow-worms. Out of wantonness and curiosity the young girl poked about in the two shining things with a thorn and—poked out the eyes of the ascetic.² Filled with anger, the saint caused retention of urine and constipation in the army of Śaryāti.³ The king for a long time sought the cause of the misfortune, and when it transpired that the great ascetic had been offended, he went to him to obtain his forgiveness. The latter will only be reconciled if the king gives him his daughter as his wife. So the young girl becomes the wife of the frail old man. One day the two Aśvins see the young wife just as she is stepping out of her bath, and try to persuade her to choose one of them as her husband instead of the ugly old man. She, however, declares that she wishes to remain faithful to her husband. Then the two physicians of the gods propose to her that they should make her husband young, and she should then choose between them both and the rejuvenated Cyavana. As Cyavana agrees to this, she consents also. Thereupon the Aśvins let the old ascetic step into the lake and they themselves also dive into the water, whereupon they all three come out quite alike and in the dazzling beauty of youth. Now Sukanyā is to choose, and after mature consideration, she decides for her own husband Cyavana.⁴ The latter, in return for having been rejuvenated, promises to make the Aśvins into Soma-drinkers. At a great sacrifice which he performs for Śaryāti, he presents the Aśvins with the Soma. The king of the gods, Indra, however, will not concede that the Aśvins, who wander about as physicians among mortals, can be worthy of the Soma. But Cyavana takes no notice of the objections of Indra, and continues to sacrifice to the Aśvins. The enraged Indra is about to hurl the thunderbolt upon him. At that moment, however, the saint paralyses the arm of the god; and in order to humble him thoroughly,⁵ he creates, by

¹ The Brāhmaṇas know nothing of these ascetic practices. Cyavāna is there only an 'old, ghostly-looking' saint.

² In the Brāhmaṇas it is the young lads in the retinue of the king who insult the old ṛṣi, pelting him with lumps of earth.

³ According to the Brāhmaṇas the punishment consisted in the arising of discord in the retinue of the king. "The father fought with his son, the brother with his brother." (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*). "The mother did not know her son, nor the son his mother." (*Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa*).

⁴ The *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* knows nothing of the fact that the Aśvins also step into the lake. But the *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa* records that Cyavāna had already previously given Sukanyā a sign by which she would recognise him.

⁵ In the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* there is no question of any humiliation of the god; Cyavāna only provides the Aśvins with the means by which they are voluntarily made participators in the Soma-drink by Indra and the other gods. In the *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa*

virtue of his asceticism, a terrible monster, *Mada*, Intoxication. With his huge mouth (the one jaw touches the earth, while the other reaches up to the sky) he approaches Indra and threatens to swallow him. Trembling with fear, the prince of gods implores the saint to have mercy, and the latter, satisfied, lets *Intoxication* vanish again, dividing him among the intoxicating drink *Surā*, women, dice and the chase.¹

We see here clearly, as in many other cases, that the brahmanical poetry which is contained in the epic, represents a much later phase of development than that of Vedic literature. The characteristic of this later brahmanical poetry, however, is exaggeration, lack of moderation in general, and especially immoderate exaltation of the saints—Brahmans and ascetics—over the gods. Even in the actual *Indra-myths* connected with the Vedic legends of the gods, Indra is no longer the mighty champion and conqueror of demons, as we knew him in the hymns of the *R̥gveda*.² It is true that the old legend of the battle between Indra and *Vṛtra* survives, it is even related twice in considerable detail in the *Mahābhārata*,³ but the main stress is laid upon the circumstance that Indra, by killing *Vṛtra*, burdened himself with the guilt of Brahman-murder. It is related in great detail how he first had to free himself from this terrible guilt, suffering many humiliations. We have seen, that for a time he was even robbed of his heavenly throne, and *Nahuṣa* occupied his place.⁴ The belief that the supremacy of Indra may be shaken by the austerities of pious Brahmans is exemplified by numerous legends. It is even said⁵ that asceticism can compel Indra himself to enter the home of *Yama* (the god of death). And often indeed does Indra have recourse to the proved expedient of allowing a beautiful *Apsaras* to seduce a saint

there is, it is true, a trial of strength between ṛṣis and gods, and the ṛṣis create *Mada* to support them. But as Indra and the gods flee from the monster, the sacrifice threatens to become an Indra-less and god-less one, and the ṛṣi begs Indra most politely, with prayers and invocations, to return. It is only in the version of the *Mahābhārata* that the god is completely humiliated by the saint.

¹ In the *Jaiminīya-Brahmaṇa* the demon *Intoxication* is transferred only to the *Surā* (brandy).

² Cf. above, pp. 71 ff.

³ III, 100 f. ; V, 9-18. The references to this fight are numerous. The legend of the fight of Indra with *Namuci*, IX, 43, is a duplicate of that of the *Vṛtra*-battle.

⁴ See above, p. 335.

⁵ III, 126, 21.

who, through his severe austerities, threatens to become dangerous to the gods.¹

Agni, too, the friend of *Indra*, has, in the myths of the *Mahābhārata*, lost much of his old glory as a god. Yet the myths related of him are still connected with the Vedic ideas of fire and of the god of fire. Already in the *Rgveda* he is called 'the lover of maidens, the husband of women'.² But the *Mahābhārata* tells of *Agni*'s definite love affairs. Thus he once became enamoured of the beautiful daughter of King *Nīla*, and the sacred fire in the king's palace would burn only if fanned by the beautiful lips and the sweet breath of the king's daughter. There was nothing for it but the king must give his daughter in marriage to *Agni*. In gratitude for this, the god grants him the favour that he may become invincible and that the women of his town may enjoy complete freedom with regard to sexual intercourse.³ The gluttony, too, of *Agni*, is already spoken of in the *Veda*. The legends of the *Mahābhārata* relate, however, that in consequence of the *Rṣi Bhṛgu*'s curse he became an 'eater of all things'. The *Agni* has several brothers and that he conceals himself in the water or in the friction-sticks, are also Vedic ideas, which already in the *Brāhmaṇas* led to the formation of myths⁴; but it is only in the *Mahābhārata* that detailed stories are told about the reason why *Agni* hid himself, and how the gods found him again.⁵

To the legends which are known already in the *Veda* and which recur in the *Mahābhārata* belongs also the flood-legend of *Manu* and the fish, which has been related above⁶ according to the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*. The narrative of the *Mahābhārata*, the 'fish episode',⁷ as it is called, differs from the legend as it is related in the *Brāhmaṇa*, in its greater detail and the poetical presentation, which is not lacking in

¹ Cf. A. Holtzmann in ZDMG., 32, 1878, pp. 290 ff., about *Indra* in the *Mahābhārata*.

² See above, p. 77.

³ II, 31. A similar love-story of *Agni*, XIII, 2.

⁴ E.g., *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, I, 2, 3, 1; *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, II, 6, 6.

⁵ Cf. A. Holtzmann, *Agni nach den Vorstellungen des Mahābhārata*. Strassburg, 1878.

⁶ Pp. 182 f.

⁷ *Matsyopākhyāna*, III, 187. German translations by F. Bopp (1829), F. Rückert, and H. Jacobi (in H. Usenel, *Die Sintflutsagen*, Bonn, 1899, pp. 28 ff.).

poetic flights—as when it is described how the ship, ‘like a drunken wench’, staggers to and fro on the agitated ocean. As regards the details of the story it is of importance that in the *Mahābhārata*, exactly as in the Semitic flood-legends, the taking of *seeds* in the ship is mentioned.¹ I see in this one of the strongest proofs that the Indian flood-legend was borrowed from the Semitic one.² The conclusion of the legend in the *Mahābhārata* differs from that in the *Brāhmaṇa*. In the epic the fish declares that he is the god Brahman, and invites Manu to create the world anew, which the latter does by means of undergoing severe austerities.³

Less familiar is the profound and beautiful myth of the Goddess Death, which is related twice in the *Mahābhārata*.⁴ “Whose child is Death? Whence comes Death? Why does Death sweep away the creatures of this world?” Thus asks Yudhiṣṭhira, sorrowing at the departure of so many heroes who had fallen in the battle. Then Bhīṣma (resp. Vyāsa)⁴ tells him the story which Nārada once related to King Anukampaka, when the latter was inconsolable at the death of his son. The contents of the narrative are briefly as follows :

When Grandfather Brahman had created the beings, they multiplied unceasingly and did not die. The worlds became over-filled, and the Earth complained to Brahman that she could no longer bear her burden. Then the Grandfather considered how he could reduce the number of beings, but he could think of no remedy. This enraged him, and the fire of his wrath

¹ Similarly in the *Matsya-Purāṇa* and in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, where the legend recurs.

² Cf. my treatise *Die Flutsagen des Altertums und der Naturvölker* in Vol. XXXI of the ‘Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien’ (Vienna), 1901, especially pp. 321 f. and 327 ff. I do not know how those who, like R. Pischel, *Der Ursprung des christlichen Fischesymbols* (SBA., XXV, 1905) deny the connection between Indian and Semitic flood-legends, account for this remarkable agreement.

³ At the new creation of the world there is no longer any mention of the ‘seeds’ which he took with him !

⁴ VII, 52-54, where Vyāsa comforts Yudhiṣṭhira, who is in deep distress at the death of Abhimanyu (s. above, p. 319), with the story ; and XII, 256-258, where Bhīṣma again tells the same story of consolation to Yudhiṣṭhira, who is lamenting at the departing of so many heroes who have fallen in the great battle. Probably the story was originally only in Book XII, for verses XII, 265, 1-6, in which there is mention of the many fallen ones in the plural number, are found again literally in VII, 52, 12-18, although here it is really only the lament for Abhimanyu which provides occasion for the narration. The poem has been translated into German by Friedrich Rückert (in Rob. Boxberger’s ‘Rückert-Studien’, Gotha, 1878, pp. 114 ff.), and by Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*, pp. 404-413.



issued from all the pores of his body, flames engulfed the world and threatened to annihilate everything. But god Śiva felt pity for the beings, and at his intercession Brahman withdrew into himself the fire which had arisen from his wrath, and ordered the origin and passing away of the beings ; while so doing, however, there came forth out of the pores of his body, a dark-eyed, beautifully adorned woman, draped in a dark red garment. She wished to go on her way towards the South, but Brahman called to her and said : "Death, kill the beings of this world ! For thou art born of my thought about world-annihilation and out of my wrath, therefore annihilate the creatures, the fools and the sages, all together !" Then the lotus-crowned *Goddess Death* wept aloud, but the lord of creatures caught up her tears in his hands. She implored him to release her from this gruesome task :

"I bow to thee, O lord of beings, be merciful to me, that I may not sweep away innocent creatures—children, old men and people in the prime of life : beloved children, trusted friends, brothers, mothers and fathers ! I shall be reproached if they die away thus. Of this I am afraid. And I fear the tears of the unhappy ones, whose moisture will burn me in eternity."

But a decision of Brahman is irrevocable. She must submit to it, but the Grandfather grants her the favour that greed, anger, jealousy, envy, hatred, infatuation and shamelessness may ruin men and that the tears which were shed by the goddess and which he holds in his hand, may become diseases to kill the creatures. Thus no blame for the death of the beings rests upon her. On the contrary, the sinners perish through their own sin. But she, the Goddess Death, free from love and free from hate, is justice itself and mistress of justice,¹ sweeping away the living creatures.

A proof of the fairly high antiquity which must be ascribed to this myth, as well as to that of *Manu* and the flood, is the exalted position which is allotted to the god *Brahman* in them. In the myth of the Goddess Death the god Śiva is subordinate to Brahman, who addresses him as 'little son'. Myths in which the god Śiva occupies a position far above all gods, indicate a much later stratum of brahmanical poetry in the *Mahābhārata*. The same is true also of the myths in which the god *Viṣṇu* plays the principal part. Frequently older brahmanical myths and legends were revised in accordance with *Viṣṇu*- or *Śiva*-worship, which is mostly not difficult to recognise. Such *Viṣṇu*ite and especially *Śiva*ite

additions often appear like blots on a painting. They are easy to distinguish, and their removal only enhances the value of the poetry. As poetical productions, the narratives which are dedicated to the glorification of the gods Viṣṇu and Śiva, are quite inferior.¹

A *Goddess Death* plays no part elsewhere in Indian mythology.² But, just as, in the above-related myth, the goddess of death becomes the goddess of justice, so in the whole of the *Mahābhārata* the idea prevails that *Yama*, the god of death, is one with *Dharma*, the personification of Law.³ But nowhere is the identification of the king of the realm of death with the lord of law and justice expressed so beautifully as in the most magnificent of all brahmanical poems which the epic has preserved, the wonderful poem of faithful *Savitri*.⁴ The partly religious character of the poem, the intermingling of mythology, indeed of the ancient brahmanical mythology, in which Grandfather Brahman determines the destinies of mankind, and neither Śiva nor Viṣṇu plays a part—and the scenery of the forest hermitage in which the greater part of the action takes place, induce me to classify the *Sāvitri*-episode among the *brahmanical* legend-poetry. Yet I am not quite certain whether it may not be a pious legend belonging to the old bard-poetry. For the independent action of the princess *Sāvitri*, who goes forth in search of a husband, and remains steadfast to her choice, although the saint and her father raise warning protestations, the independence with which she practises asceticism, offers sacrifices, and takes vows upon herself,⁵ and above all, her courageous inter-

¹ Devoted exclusively to the sectarian cult are portions such as the *Viṣṇusahasranāmakathana* (XIII, 149), the enumeration of the thousand names of Viṣṇu, the *Satarudriya* (VII, 202), 'the hundred names of Śiva', and the *Śivasahasranāmastotra* (XII, 284, 16 ff.) 'Praise of Śiva in a thousand names'. Cf. above, pp. 162 f.

² To my knowledge it only recurs once again in the *Brahmavaivartta-Purāṇa* by the side of *Yama* (Th. Aufrecht, *Catalogus codicum MSS. Sanscritorum in Bibl. Bodleiana*, p. 22a).

³ Concerning the god *Dharma* also s. above, pp. 289 and 329.

⁴ III, 293-299: *Sāvitryupākhyāna* 'episode of *Sāvitri*' or *Pativrata-māhātmya* 'the song in praise of the faithful wife'. The story is told by the seer *Mārkaṇḍeya*, who, though many thousand years old, is eternally young, to *Yudhiṣṭhira* in order to comfort him with regard to the fate of *Draupadī*.

⁵ According to brahmanical precept a woman as such (separate from her husband) is not entitled to perform sacrifices nor to undertake fasts and other vows (*Manu*, V. 165).



cession for the life of her husband, as well as her knowledge of wise sayings, by means of which she even impresses the god of death—all this recalls more the women of heroic poetry, such as Draupadī, Kuntī and Vidulā, than the brahmanical ideal of woman.¹ But whoever it was who sang the song of Sāvitrī, whether a Sūta or a Brahman, he was certainly one of the greatest poets of all times. Only a great poet was capable of placing this noble female character before us so that we seem to see her before our eyes. Only a true poet could have described in such a touching and elevating manner the victory of love and constancy, of virtue and wisdom, over destiny and death, without even for an instant falling into the tone of the dry preacher of morality.² And only an inspired artist could have produced as if by magic such wonderful pictures before us. We see the deeply distressed woman walking by the side of her husband who is doomed to death ; the husband, mortally ill, wearily laying his head on his wife's lap, the dreadful form of the god of death, who binds the man's soul with fetters and leads it away ; the wife, wrestling with the god of death for the life of her husband ; and finally, the happily re-united pair, wandering homewards in the moonlight with their arms around each other. And we see all these pictures in the splendid setting of a primeval Indian forest, whose deep stillness we seem to feel, and whose delicious fragrance we seem to breathe, when we surrender ourselves to the magic of this incomparable poem.

How well the Hindus themselves appreciate the treasure which they possess in this immortal poem, is shown in the closing words which have been added to the poem in our *Mahābhārata* :

¹ This ideal is, in short, the 'Griselda ideal'—the unconditionally obedient, submissive wife, of whom Manu teaches, V, 154 : "Even if a husband is lacking in all virtues, only indulges in sensual pleasure and possesses no good qualities of any kind, he must ever be honoured as a god by a virtuous wife."

² The conversation between Sāvitrī and Yama, the God of Death, who is at the same time Dharma, forms the nucleus of the poem. Some of the verses may have been badly transmitted. Yet the fundamental thought of all the verses by means of which Sāvitrī so greatly pleases the god and vanquishes him, is sufficiently clear ; it is the doctrine of wisdom that is one with love and goodness.

"He who has heard with devotion the glorious story of Savitrī, that man is fortunate, his affairs will prosper, and never will sorrow visit him."

Still at the present day, Hindu women annually celebrate a festival (*Sāvitrīvrata*) in remembrance of faithful Sāvitrī, to secure married happiness for themselves, in which festival the recitation of this poem from the *Mahābhārata*, forms an essential part of the celebration.¹

The poem has frequently been translated into European languages including German.² But all translations, adaptations and imitations can only give a feeble idea of the incomparable charm of the Indian poem.

Not all brahmanical legends are so pious and moral as that of Sāvitrī. Indeed, a whole volume could easily be filled with disgusting and obscene stories from the *Mahābhārata* which pleased the Brahmans. One of these legends has however, rightly attained fame as a poem, and is, moreover, very important for the criticism of the *Mahābhārata*. This is the legend of *R̥ṣyaśṛṅga*,³ the ṛṣi who had never seen a woman. The contents of this ancient Indian tale are briefly as follows:

R̥ṣyaśṛṅga,⁴ born miraculously of an antelope, is the son of a saint, who grows up in a hermitage in a forest, without ever having seen any person besides his father. Above all, he has never seen a woman. Now there was once a great drought in the kingdom of King Lomapāda, and

¹ *Of.* Shib Chunder Bose, *The Hindoos as They are*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1883, pp. 293 ff.

² English translations by R. T. H. Griffith (1852, and *Idylls from the Sanskrit*, Allahabad 1912, pp. 113 ff.) and J. Muir (Edinburgh, 1880). German renderings by F. Bopp (1829), F. Rückert (in *Brahmanische Legenden*, 1836), H. C. Kellner (*Reclams Universal Bibliothek*, 1895). For other translations s. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata II*, pp. 92 f. The Sāvitrī poem has also been adapted for the stage by Ferdinand Graf Sporck, with music by Hermann Zumpe, and produced in German theatres.

³ III, 110-113. Freely rendered into German by A. Holtzmann in *Indische Sagen*, and by J. V. Widmann (Buddha, Bern, 1869, pp. 101 ff.). Very freely dramatised by A. Christina Albers in *Calcutta Review*, Nov., 1923, pp. 231 ff. (*The Great Drought*). J. Hertel (WZKM., 18, 1904, pp. 158 f.) and L. v. Schroeder, *Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda*, pp. 292 ff., have tried to explain the *R̥ṣyaśṛṅga* poem as an ancient drama, a kind of 'mystery play'. It is really a ballad of the type of the Vedic Ākhyānas. H. Lüders (NGGW., 1897, pp. 1 ff.; 1901, pp. 1 ff.) has traced the older forms of this ballad, by comparing its different versions in Indian literature.

⁴ The name means 'the antelope-horned'. As he has *one* horn on his head, he is also in Buddhistic versions called *Ekaśṛṅga*, i.e., 'Unicorn'.



the sages declared : the gods are angry, and the rain will fall only if the king succeeds in bringing Ṛṣyaśṛṅga into his country. The king's daughter Śāntā¹ undertakes the task of enticing the young saint into the land. A floating hermitage is constructed of artificial trees and shrubs, and in this Śāntā sails to the dwelling place of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. Arriving in the vicinity of the forest hermitage, the king's daughter steps ashore and takes advantage of the absence of the father of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, in order to approach the youthful ascetic. She gives him magnificent fruits and delicious wine, plays coquettishly with a ball, and clings in a tender embrace to the youth, who thinks he sees before him a hermit lad like himself. Thereupon the maiden returns to the ship, as the father of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga approaches the hermitage. The old man notices the excitement of his son, and asks him what has happened. The latter then describes his adventure with the beautiful 'youth' and his rapture at meeting him, in glowing terms, and says that he would fain practise the same 'ascetic discipline' as yonder youth, for he yearns to see him again. But the father warns him that these are evil demons (rakṣas) who go about in that shape to disturb the asceticism of pious men.

But no sooner has the father departed again, than Ṛṣyaśṛṅga goes in search of his young 'friend'. Soon he has found beautiful Śāntā, is enticed by her into the floating hermitage, and is carried away into Loma-pāda's kingdom. The moment the young saint enters the land, the rain begins to fall in torrents. The king makes him his son-in-law, after he has conciliated the old father by means of rich gifts.

Various versions of this legend may be found in other Indian works of literature, especially in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the *Padma-Purāṇa* and in the Buddhist *Jātaka* book. It is easy to recognize that though the ballad is based on an old legend with a religious background, it was related in its original form with a racy humour whose indecencies the various revisors endeavoured to mitigate. The scene in which the ascetic's son, who has never seen a woman, catches sight of the beautiful maiden, whom he takes for an ascetic, though

¹ In our *Mahābhārata* it is not Śāntā, but a courtesan, who seduces the saint. Lüders (*loc. cit.*) has proved convincingly, however, that not only in the original form of the legend, as it has come down to us in the *Jātaka*-book of the Buddhist Tipiṭaka but also in an earlier form of the *Mahābhārata* itself, the princess Śāntā was the seducer. Only some later rhapsodist or copyist took exception to a king's daughter being said to have seduced Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, and put a courtesan in her place, so that we do not know why the king finally gives his daughter in marriage to the saint. It may be mentioned that Holtzmann, in his freely rendering (*loc. cit.*) has already made the princess Śāntā the seducer of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga.

her charms do not leave him unmoved, was certainly the central point of the story in the original version, and was described with a coarse humour, of whose rudeness some examples are still preserved in the Buddhistic Jātaka.¹ But how popular this humorous tale was, is shown by its being familiar in different versions in Tibet, China and Japan, and in its having left traces behind even in the unicorn-legend of the West.²

The R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-legend is in the so-called *Tīrthayātrā*-section.³ The R̥ṣi Lomaśa, who has come in order to console the brothers of Arjuna,⁴ makes a pilgrimage with them. At every sacred place (Tirtha) which they visit, the ṛṣi relates a story referring to that place. Thus there are collected in this section (certainly not belonging to the oldest parts of the *Mahābhārata*) numerous brahmanical legends. Here we find, for example, the above-related legend of Cyavana,⁵ similarly the legends of the famous R̥ṣi Agastya. This great saint is asked by the gods, among other things, to dry up the ocean, so that they may fight against certain demons who dwell on the bottom of the ocean. The saint does this quite simply by drinking up the whole ocean. He is also the hero of numerous other brahmanical legends.⁶

While these Agastya-legends are intended to show the tremendous ascendancy of the brahmanical saint over gods and men, we find in the *Mahābhārata* also a whole cycle of legends, the heroes of which are the famous R̥ṣis Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra,⁷ and in which, though in the end they also serve

¹ In the *Gāthās of the Jātakas* Nos. 523 and 526. These Gāthās are, according to Lüders (*loc. cit.*, 1897, p. 38), "the oldest remnants of a literary setting of the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-legend", "and these verses were, at any rate, partly known to the author of the *Mahābhārata* version, and translated into Sanskrit and more or less transformed, were included in his work".

² Cf. F. W. K. Müller, *Ikkaku seunin, eine mittelalterliche japanische Oper, transkribiert und übersetzt, Nebst einem Exkurs zur Einhornssage* (in the 'Festschrift für Adolf Bastian zu seinem 70. Geburtstag, Berlin, 1896, pp. 513-538).

³ I. e., 'section of pilgrimages', III, 80-156. Sacred places to which pilgrimages (yātrā) are undertaken, are called *Tīrthas*.

⁴ See above, p. 305.

⁵ Pp. 391 f.

⁶ III, 96-109.

⁷ I, 177-182; V, 106-119; IX, 39 f.; 42 f.; XII, 141; XIII, 3 f. Cf. J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. I, 3rd ed. (London 1890), pp. 388 ff., 411 ff., and F. E. Pargiter in JRAS., 1913, pp. 885 ff.



for the glorification of the Brahmans, there can still be perceived distinct traces of the struggle for supremacy between priests and warriors. The roots of these legends reach back far into the Vedic period, and they recur in various versions also in the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic and in the Purāṇas. The contents of the legend according to the *Mahābhārata* are briefly as follows :

Viśvāmitra was a warrior, the son of King Gādhin of Kanyākubja (Kanauj). One day, in the course of his hunting, he came to the hermitage of Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha. The latter had a marvellous cow which fulfilled all his wishes. When he desired anything, whether food or drink, jewels or garments, or whatever it might be, he had only to say : 'Give', and the cow Nandinī granted it to him. When Viśvāmitra saw the excellent cow, he desired to have it, and offered Vasiṣṭha ten thousand ordinary cows for it. But the latter would not give it up, as it gave him everything he ever wanted for sacrificial purposes. Viśvāmitra now wanted to steal the cow, according to 'warriors' custom'. Vasiṣṭha, as a gentle Brahman, did not hinder him in this, but the marvellous cow itself brought forth out of its body, mighty hosts of warriors, by whom the troops of Viśvāmitra were defeated and put to flight. Then the proud king sees that the power of Brahmans is after all greater than that of warriors : he gives up his kingdom and performs severe austerities in order to become a Brahman, in which he succeeds after unutterable efforts.

I may quote one other remarkable legend in this cycle of myths, because it recalls certain features of the Ahasuerus-legend :

Even after Viśvāmitra has become a Brahman, his enmity with Vasiṣṭha continues. Instigated by Viśvāmitra, Kalmāṣapāda, who is possessed by a Rākṣasa, kills the sons of Vasiṣṭha. But the latter is so full of mildness that he will rather die than give vent to his anger. He is about to end his life, and throws himself down from Mount Meru, but falls on a pile of wool. He enters the fire, but it does not burn him. With a stone around his neck he throws himself into the sea, but is thrust out again living. So he returns with a sorrowful heart to his hermitage. But when he sees his home empty of children, grief brings him back anew to thoughts of suicide. He hurls himself into a swollen mountain stream, after having tied his limbs fast with ropes, but the current tears his fetters and throws him on to a bank. Wandering further, he comes to a river which is full of crocodiles and horrible monsters ; he throws himself in, but the wild animals timidly shrink away from him. As he sees that he

cannot die by his own hand, he returns again to his hermitage, after having wandered over hills and countries. On the way he meets his daughter-in-law Adṛśyantī, and he hears a voice like that of his son singing Veda hymns. It is the voice of his as yet unborn grandchild, who already in his mother's womb—Adṛśyantī has been pregnant with him since twelve years—has learned all the Vedas. As soon as he knows that he is to have descendants, he gives up his thoughts of suicide.

While the literary value of this kind of brahmanical legends cannot be gainsaid, there are also numerous stories in the *Mahābhārata* which are invented purely for the purpose of the glorification of the Brahmans or for the inculcation of some brahmanical doctrine or other. We have, for instance, tales of pupils who go to the utmost extremes in obedience towards their teacher, like that Uddālaka Āruṇi, who is commissioned by his teacher to block a leaking dam, and does this, as no other way presents itself to him, with his own body. Or the story is told of a king who, as a punishment for having given a Brahman's cow to someone else, was changed into a lizard.¹ Other stories are intended to prove that there is no greater merit than giving cows to Brahmans. In a famous Upaniṣad the youth Naciketas, thirsting for knowledge, utilises his sojourn in the underworld to question the god of death about the Beyond. In the *Mahābhārata*, the youth, who is here called Nāciketa, asks to see the paradise of the cow-givers, and Yama delights him with a long lecture upon the merit which one acquires by presenting cows.² In order to prove that it is meritorious to give sunshades and shoes, it is related that Ṛṣi Jamadagni was once angry with the sun, and was just about to shoot it down from the sky, when the sun-god pacified him in the nick of time, by giving him a sunshade and a pair of shoes.³ Such stories are frequent especially in the didactic sections and books (*XII* and *XIII*). In these didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata* we find finally also numerous frame-stories called 'Itihāsas' which serve only to introduce and give a certain form to the

¹ I, 3; XIII, 70 f.

² XIII, 71. Cf. above, pp. 228 f.

³ XIII, 95 f.

talks upon law, morality or philosophy. It is noteworthy that, in these Itihāsas, we occasionally meet with the same personages as speakers whom we met in the Upaniṣads, *e. g.*, Yājñavalkya and Janaka.¹ And as in the Upaniṣads and the Buddhistic dialogues, so in the didactic Itihāsas of the *Mahābhārata* too, we meet learned women² as well as kings and sages.³

FABLES, PARABLES AND MORAL NARRATIVES IN THE MAHABHARATA⁴

These Itihāsa-Saṃvādas, as we may call those discourses clothed in the form of narratives (saṃvāda), for the greater part no longer belong to the brahmanical legend-poetry, but to what, for lack of a better expression, we have called Ascetic poetry.⁵ The latter is clearly distinguishable from the brahmanical poetry connected with the ancient legends of the gods, which are already forgotten to a considerable extent among the people; it is far more closely related to the *popular* literature of fables and fairy-tales, partly because it draws upon the latter, and partly because it approaches it as closely as possible. And while the brahmanical legends, like the brahmanical Itihāsa-Saṃvādas, serve the special interests of the priests and teach a narrow priestly morality, reaching its climax in the sacrificial service and in the worship of the Brahmins (more than of the gods), the ascetic poetry rises to a general morality of mankind, which teaches, above all, love towards all beings and renunciation of the world. Traces of this literature are first to be found in the Upaniṣads, but later just as much in the *Mahābhārata* and in some Purāṇas, as in the sacred texts of the Buddhists and the Jainas. Therefore

¹ XII, 18 ; 290 ; 310-320.

² King Janaka disputes with the nun Sulabhā, XII, 320. King Senajit is comforted by the verses of the courtesan Piṅgalā, XII, 174.

³ Occasionally also gods, *e.g.*, Indra and Brhaspati, XII, 11 ; 21 ; 68 ; 84 ; 103 ; XIII, 111-113.

⁴ A selection of moral narratives, especially out of Book XII, from the *Mahābhārata*, is given in French translation by A. Roussel, *Légendes Morales de l'Inde empruntées au Bhagavata Purāṇa et au Mahābhārata traduites du Sanskrit* ('Les littératures populaires', 38 et 39), Paris, 1900. On fables and parables s. Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 66 ff.

⁵ See M. Winternitz in *Calcutta Review*, Oct., 1923, pp. 1 ff.

it is not to be wondered at, that in these different literatures we often meet with the same legends of saints and the same maxims of wisdom and ethics, often literally the same.

The oldest Indian fables are to be found, indeed, already in the actual epic, and they serve for the inculcation of rules of *Niti*, i.e., worldly wisdom, as well as of *Dharma* or morality. Thus a minister advises Dhṛtarāṣṭra to deal with the Pāṇḍavas in a similar manner as a certain jackal, who utilised his four friends, a tiger, a mouse, a wolf and an ichneumon, for the purpose of obtaining his prey, but then cunningly got rid of them, so that the prey remained for him alone.¹ In another place Śiśupāla compares Bhiṣma with that old hypocritical flamingo, which always talked only of morality and enjoyed the confidence of all its fellow-birds, so that they all entrusted it with the keeping of their eggs, until they discover too late, that the flamingo eats the eggs. Delightful also is the fable of the treacherous cat, which Ulūka, in the name of Duryodhana, relates to Yudhiṣṭhira, at whom it is aimed. With uplifted arms the cat performs severe austerities on the bank of the Ganges; and he is ostensibly so pious and good that not only the birds worship him, but even the mice entrust themselves to his protection. He declares himself willing to protect them, but says that in consequence of his asceticism he is so weak that he cannot move. Therefore the mice must carry him to the river—where he devours them and grows fat.² The wise Vidura, into whose mouth many wise sayings are placed, also knows many fables. Thus he advises Dhṛtarāṣṭra not to pursue the Pāṇḍavas out of self-interest, that it may not befall him as it befell the king who, out of greed, killed the birds which disgorged gold, so that he then had neither birds nor gold.³ In order to bring about peace, he also relates the fable of the

¹ I, 140. On similar fables, cf. Th. Benfey, *Pantschatantra*, I, pp. 472 f.

² II, 41; V, 160. Such fables, in which animals appear as hypocritical ascetics, are not at all rare in Indian fable literature, cf. Th. Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, pp. 177 f., 352; and M. Bloomfield, *JAOS.*, 44, 1924, pp. 202 ff.

³ II, 62. Related to this is the fairy-tale of *Suvarṇaṣṭhīvin* (i.e., 'he who drops gold out of his mouth'), the son of King *Srñjaya*. The latter had desired a son whose entire evacuations should be gold. The wish is fulfilled, and the gold accumulates in his palace. But finally the son is kidnapped by robbers (*dasyus*) and murdered, and all the gold vanishes. VII, 55. Cf. Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, 379.



birds which flew up with the net which had been thrown out by the fowler, but finally fell into the hands of the fowler, because they began to quarrel with one another.¹

Most of the fables, as well as all the parables and moral narratives, are to be found in the didactic sections and in *Books XII and XIII*. Many of these recur in the Buddhistic and later collections of fables and fairy-tales, and some have been transmitted into European narrative literature. Thus Benfey has traced through the literature of the world a series of fables which all deal with the subject of the impossibility of friendship between cat and mouse.²

Many a pretty parable, too, is to be found in the didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata*. Thus "the old Itihāsa, the conversation between the river and the ocean",³ is related in order to inculcate the wise theory that it is good to stoop :

"The ocean asks the rivers how it is that they uproot strong mighty trees and bring them to him, while they never bring the thin weak reed. Gangā answers him : 'The trees stand, each in its place, firmly rooted to one spot. Because they oppose the current, they must move from their place. Not so the reed. The reed bends as soon as it sees the current approaching—not so the trees—and when the force of the current has passed by, it stands erect again'."

Great fame and almost universal propagation has been attained by the parable of the 'Man in the well' which the wise Vidura relates to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra.⁴ For its own sake as well as on account of its significance in universal literature, it deserves to be quoted in an extract and partly in translation :

A Brahman loses his way in a dense forest full of beasts of prey. In great terror he runs here and there, looking in vain for a way out. "Then

¹ V, 64. Cf. also the fable of the crow which desires to enter on a flying-race with the flamingo, VIII, 41, translated by Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, pp. 312 ff., where also other related fables are indicated.

² XII, 111 ; 138 ; 139 (also *Harivaṃśa*, 20, 1117 ff.) translated and traced in other literatures by Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, 575 ff., 545 ff. Other fables of the *Mahābhārata* which are part of universal literature, are that of the three fishes XII, 137 (Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, 243 f.) and that of the saint's dog which is changed into a leopard, a tiger, an elephant, a lion, a Śarabha and finally again into a dog, XII, 116 f. (Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, 374 f.).

³ XII, 113.

⁴ XI, 5.

he sees that the terrible forest is surrounded on all sides by traps and is embraced by both arms of a dreadful-looking woman. Great and terrible five-headed dragons, which reach up like rocks to the sky, surround this great forest." And in the middle of this forest, covered by underwood and creeping plants, there is a well. The Brahman falls into it and is caught on the intertwined branches of a creeper. "As the great fruit of a bread-fruit tree, held by its stalk, hangs down, so he hung there, feet upwards, head downwards. And yet another even greater danger threatens him there. In the middle of the well he perceived a great, mighty dragon, and at the edge of the lid of the well he saw a black, six-mouthed and twelve-footed giant elephant slowly approaching." In the branches of the tree which covered the well, swarmed all kinds of dreadful-looking bees, preparing honey. The honey drips down and is greedily drunk by the man hanging in the well. For he was not weary of existence, and did not give up hope of life, though white and black mice gnawed the tree on which he hung. The forest, so Vidura explains the metaphor to the king who was filled with pity, is the *samsāra*, existence in the world : the beasts of prey are the diseases, the hideous giantess is old age, the well is the body of beings, the dragon at the bottom of the well is time, the creepers in which the man was caught, the hope of life, the six-mouthed and twelve-footed elephant, the year with six seasons and twelve months : the mice are the days and nights, and the drops of honey are sensual enjoyments.

There can be no doubt that this parable is a genuine Indian production of ascetic poetry. It has been called 'originally Buddhistic',¹ but it does not correspond more with the Buddhists' view of life than with that of the Jainas and of other Indian ascetic sects. However, it probably was the Buddhistic versions of the parable which paved the way for it to the West ; for it penetrated into the literature of the West principally with that stream of literature which flowed to the West through the popular books 'Barlaam and Joasaph' and 'Kalilah and Dimnah', which originated in *India*, but later became absolutely international. But in Germany it is most familiar through Rückert's beautiful poem 'Es war ein Mann in Syrerland', whose immediate source is a Persian

¹ Thus Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, pp. 80 ff., and M. Haberlandt, *Der altindische Geist* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. 209 ff.



poem by Jelâl-ed-dîn Rûmî.¹ Ernst Kuhn has traced throughout all the literatures of the world the "circulation of this truly non-sectarian parable which has served equally for the edification of Brahmans, Jainas, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Christians and Jews."²

As with this parable, so with many *moral narratives* of the *Mahābhārata*, one might be inclined to trace them back to Buddhistic sources. On closer scrutiny, however, they could equally well have been drawn from that source of popular narratives which was alike at the disposal of Brahmans, Buddhists and other sects. Thus, for example, the stories of King Śibi not only look very Buddhistic, but, in a text belonging to the Tipiṭaka³ the legend is actually already related, how this self-sacrificing king tears out both his eyes in order to give them to a beggar. In the *Mahābhārata* the story is told in three different versions,⁴ how the king cuts the flesh from his own body piece-meal and gives up his life, in order to save the life of a dove which is pursued by a hawk. This same king Śibi, however, already plays a part in the old heroic legends of Yayāti. He is one of the four pious grandsons of this king, who offer him their places in heaven and finally ascend to heaven with him.⁵ The description, too, of the immeasurable riches and the tremendous generosity of Śibi in another place, where he is glorified as a pious sacrificer, who gives the Brahmans as many oxen as rain-drops fall upon the earth, as there are stars in the sky and grains of sand in the bed of the Ganges, is distinctly brahmanical in colouring.⁶

¹ Friedrich Rückert's *Werke*, publ. by C. Beyer, Vol. I, pp. 104 f. The Persian poem from the second Diwan of Jelâl-ed-dîn Rûmî, translated by Joseph v. Hammer, *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*, Vienna, 1818, p. 183. Cf. also R. Boxberger, *Rückert Studien*, pp. 85 f., 94 ff.

² In the 'Festgruss an O. v. Böhtlingk', Stuttgart, 1888, pp. 68-76.

³ *Cariyāpiṭaka*, I, 8. Cf. also the *Sivi-Jātaka* (*Jātakas*, ed. V. Fausböll, IV, 401 ff., No. 499) and Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, 388 ff.

⁴ III, 130 f.; 197, XIII, 32. See Griffith, *Idylls from the Sanskrit*, pp. 123 ff. ('The Suppliant Dove').

⁵ I, 86 and 93, Cf. above, p. 334.

⁶ VII, 58. The legend of Śibi, too, which is related in III, 198, is quite brahmanical. Here, at the wish of a Brahman, he unhesitatingly kills his own son and—even eats him himself, because the Brahman commands it. On the other hand, the narrative of King Suhotra and Śibi (III, 194) looks more Buddhistic, and in fact,

To the stories of self-sacrifice so popular in ascetic poetry, belongs also the touching narrative of the huntsman and the doves,¹ which has also been included in *one* recension of the Pañcatantra.² Love of one's enemy, and self-denial can hardly go further than in this 'sacred, sin-destroying Itihāsa', which relates how the male dove burns himself in the fire for the wicked hunter, who has caught his beloved wife because he has no other food to offer the 'guest', how the dove follows her husband into death, and how the wicked hunter, deeply touched by the great love and self-sacrifice of the pair of doves, gives up wild life, becomes an ascetic and finally also seeks death in the fire.³

Another side of ascetic morality is illustrated by the story of the pious ascetic Mudgala, who does not want to go to heaven :

As Mudgala is so wise and pious, a messenger of the gods appears, in order to lead him up to heaven. But Mudgala is careful enough to enquire first what the heavenly life is like. The messenger of the gods then describes to him all the glories of heaven and all the bliss which there awaits the pious. Certainly, he cannot conceal the fact that this bliss is not of eternal duration. Everyone must reap the fruits of his actions. When once the *Karman* is exhausted, then one must descend again from heaven and begin a new existence. Then Mudgala will have none of such a heaven ; he devotes himself afresh to ascetic practices and finally through deep meditation (*dhyānayoga*) and complete indifference towards the sense-world attains to that highest place of Viṣṇu, in which alone the eternal bliss of Nirvāṇa is to be found.⁴

The doctrine of *Karman*, Action, which is the fate of man, the first appearance of which we observed in the Upaniṣads,⁵ forms the subject of many profound narratives in the *Mahābhārata*. One of the most beautiful is that of the

though no longer referring to Śibi, actually recurs in Buddhist literature (Jātaka No. 151). Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, London, 1880, pp. xxii-xxviii, R. O. Franke, WZKM., 20, 1906, pp. 320 ff.

¹ XII, 143-149.

² See Benfey, *loc. cit.*, I, pp. 365 f., II, 247 ff.

³ The story can hardly be Buddhistic, as Buddhism does not advise religious suicide. Other sects, e.g., the Jainas, recommend it.

⁴ III, 260 f. E. Windisch (*Festschrift Kuhn*, pp. 4 f.) sees in this Mudgala the prototype of the Buddhist Maudgalyāyana who visits the heavens and hells.

⁵ See above, pp. 225 f.

Snake, Death, Fate and Action. The contents are briefly as follows :

Gautamī, an old and pious Brahman woman, one day finds her son dead. A snake has bitten him. The grim hunter Arjunaka drags the snake along by a rope and asks Gautamī how he shall kill the wicked murderer of her son. Gautamī replies that through the killing of the snake her child will not be restored to life ; nor would any good arise from it ; for by the killing of a living being one only burdens oneself with guilt. The hunter objects, saying that it is good to kill enemies, even as Indra killed Vṛtra. But Gautamī can see no good in torturing and killing enemies. Then the snake also joins in the conversation. It says that it is not to blame for the death of the boy. It was *Mṛtyu*, death, who only employed it as his instrument. Now, while the snake and the hunter are in violent dispute as to whether the snake was to blame for the death of the child or not, the god of death, *Mṛtyu*, appears himself and declares that neither the snake nor he himself were to blame for the boy's death, but *Fate* (*Kāla*, 'time'): for everything that happens, happens through *Kāla*; everything that exists, exists through *Kāla*. "As the clouds are driven hither and thither by the wind", so also death is under the sway of fate. While the hunter insists on the point of view that both the snake and *Mṛtyu* are guilty of the child's death, *Kāla* himself appears, and declares : "Neither I nor death (*Mṛtyu*) nor this snake here is to blame for the death of any being, O hunter, we are not the cause. *Action* (*Karman*) it is, which has driven us to it ; there is no other cause of his destruction, only through his own action was he killed.....As the potter shapes out of a lump of clay everything he desires, so man attains only that fate which he has prepared for himself by his action. As light and shade are always most closely connected with each other, so also the deed and the doer are closely connected through everything which he himself has done." Then Gautamī consoles herself with the thought that the death of her son was the necessary effect of his and her own *Karman*.¹

How human beings are to behave towards *death*, is a question which Indian thinkers and poets have again and again treated in innumerable maxims, and also in many a consolatory story.² One of the most beautiful of these stories is that of the Vulture and Jackal and the Dead Child, the contents of which shall again only be briefly indicated :

The only little son of a Brahman had died. Lamenting and weeping, the relatives carried the corpse of the little child out to the place of burial.

¹ XIII, 1.

² See above, p. 275 and Lüders in ZDMG., 58, 1904, pp. 707 ff.

In their grief they could not bear to part from their dead darling. Attracted by the sounds of lamentation, a vulture comes flying to the place, and explains to them how futile are all lamentations for the dead. No mortal returns to life when he has once succumbed to Kāla;¹ therefore they should return home without delay. Consoled to some extent, the mourners begin the homeward journey. Then a jackal comes towards them and reproaches them with want of love, because they leave their own child so quickly. Sadly they turn back again. Here the vulture awaits them and reproves them for their weakness. One should not mourn for the dead, but for one's own self. This one should above all cleanse from sin, not weep for the dead; for all the weal and woe of man depends only on the Karman. "The wise man and the fool, the rich man and the poor man, they all come into the power of Kāla, with their good and bad deeds. What do you want with your mourning? Why do you complain of death?" and so on. Again the mourners turn homewards and again the jackal exhorts them not to give up their love towards their offspring; one should make efforts against fate, for it may perhaps after all still be possible to restore the child to life. Whereupon the vulture remarks: "A thousand years old am I, but I have never seen a dead person come to life again.....Those who do not care for their mother and father, their relatives and friends *so long as they are alive*, commit a crime against morality. But of what benefit is your weeping to one who does not see with his eyes, who does not move and is absolutely dead?" Again and again does the vulture urge the mourners to return home, whilst the jackal tells them to return to the burial place. This is repeated several times. Vulture and jackal thereby pursue their own ends, for they are both hungry, and greedy for the corpse. At last god Śiva, urged by his wife Umā, has pity on the poor relatives and lets the child become alive again.²

But it is not only the morality of asceticism which finds expression in the moral narratives of the *Mahābhārata*. Many of them appeal to us particularly for the reason that they teach more the every-day morality which is rooted in the love between husband and wife, parents and children. One of the prettiest of these narratives is that of Cirakārin or the Youth Ponder-well,³ who is instructed by his father to kill his mother who has sinned grievously. As he is by nature slow and considers everything at length, he delays the execution

¹ Kāla is not only 'time' and 'fate', but also 'destiny of death'.

² XII, 153.

³ XII, 265, translated by Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*, pp. 437-444.



of the command, and considers from this and that point of view, whether he should carry out his father's command and burden himself with matricide, or neglect his duty to his father. While he is pondering so long, his father returns, and, as his anger has in the meantime vanished, he rejoices deeply that his son Ponder-well has, true to his name, pondered the matter so long. In the centre of this narrative, which is presented in simple popular tone with a certain humour, stands the soliloquy of the youth. In beautiful words he speaks of paternal love and filial duties, and in still more beautiful words, of maternal love :

"So long as one has a mother one is well cared for ; when she is lost, one is without protection. He who enters his house with the cry 'O mother' ! is oppressed by no sorrow, is undisturbed by age though he were robbed of all his wealth. Though one has sons and grandsons, even though one is full a hundred years old, when he comes to his mother he behaves like a two-year old child..... When he has lost his mother, then a man becomes old, then he becomes unhappy, then the world is empty for him. There is no cool shade like a mother, there is no refuge like a mother, there is no beloved like a mother....."

The main point of all these narratives lies in the speeches of the characters. But I have already mentioned that many so-called *Itihāsas* are actually only short introductions and frames of didactic *dialogues*, so that we can call them *Itihāsa-saṃvādas*. Some of these dialogues rank equally with the best similar productions of the Upaniṣad-literature and of the Buddhistic literature. The saying of King *Janaka* of Videha, after he has obtained peace of mind sounds as though it had been taken from an Upaniṣad : "O, immeasurable is my wealth, for I possess nothing. Though the whole of Mithilā burn, nothing of mine burns."¹ And the verses of the courtesan *Piṅgalā*, who is bereft of her lover at the trysting-

¹ XII, 178. J. Muir (*Metrical Translations*, p. 50) translates :

"How vast my wealth, what joy I taste,
Who nothing own and nought desire !
Were this fair city wrapped in fire,
The flame no goods of mine would waste."

Mithilā is the residence of Janaka. Cf. *Jātaka* (ed. Fausböll), Vol. V, p. 252 (Verse 16 of the *Sonakajātaka* No. 529), and Vol. VI, p. 54 (No. 539). R. O. Franke, *WZKM.*, 20, 1906, pp. 352 f.



place, and after overcoming her grief, attains to that deep calmness of soul which has always been the highest aim of all Indian ascetic wisdom, verses which end in the words : "Calmly sleeps Piṅgalā, after she has put non-desire in the place of wishes and hopes¹," recall the Buddhist nun-songs (*Therīgāthā*). As occasionally in the Upaniṣads,² so also in the dialogues in the *Mahābhārata*, it is often people of despised caste and low rank, who are in the possession of the highest wisdom. Thus the Brahman Kauśika is instructed by *Dharmavyādha*, the pious hunter and dealer in meat, upon philosophy and morality, and especially about the theory that not birth, but virtuous life, makes one a Brahman.³ Thus also the pedlar *Tulādhāra* appears as the teacher of the brahmanical ascetic Jājali.⁴ This Itihāsa-dialogue is so important in the history of Indian ethics, that it merits being given here in extract :

The Brahman Jājali lived as a hermit in the forest, and gave himself up to the most frightful austerities. Clothed in rags and skins, stiff with dirt, he wandered through the forest in rain and storm, undertook severe fasts, and defied every inclemency of the weather. Once he stood in the forest, deep in yoga, like a wooden post, without moving. There a pair of birds came flying towards him, and in the hair of his head, which was dishevelled by the storm and matted with the dirt and rain, they built a nest. When the yogin noticed this, he did not stir, but remained standing immovable as a pillar, till the female bird had laid eggs in the nest on his head, till the eggs were hatched and the young birds were fledged and had flown away. After this mighty feat of asceticism, Jājali, filled with pride, shouts exultingly into the forest : "I have reached the essence of all devotion." Then a heavenly voice answered him out of the regions of the air : "In devotion thou art not even equal to Tulādhāra, O Jājali, and not even this very wise Tulādhāra, who dwells in Benares, may speak of himself as thou speakest." Then Jājali becomes very disheartened, and went to Tulādhāra at Benares, to see in what manner the latter had advanced so far in devotion. Tulādhāra, however, is a pedlar in Benares, where he keeps an open shop and sells all kinds of spices, healing herbs, and so on. To the enquiry of the Brahman Jājali as to whereof his

¹ XII, 174 ; 178, 7 f. Cf. O. Böhtlingk, *Indische Sprüche*, Nos. 1050 f. Buddhistic parallels are quoted by R. O. Franke, *WZKM.*, 20, 1906, pp. 346 f.

² See above, pp. 198 f.

³ III, 207-216.

⁴ XII, 261-264 ; translated by Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*, pp. 418-435.



renowned devotion consists, he replies in a long speech upon morality, beginning with the words :

"I know, O Jājali, the eternal law with all its secrets : it is known to men as the old doctrine, beneficial to all, the doctrine of *love*.¹ A manner of life which is combined with complete harmlessness, or only with slight harm, to all beings, that is the highest devotion ; in accordance with this I live, O Jājali. With wood and grass which others have cut, I have built myself this hut. Red lac, lotus-root, lotus-fibres, all kinds of sweet perfumes, many kinds of juices and drinks, with the exception of intoxicating drinks, I buy and sell without deception. He, O Jājali, who is a friend of all beings and always rejoices in the well-being of all in thought, word and deed, he knows the moral law. I know neither favour nor disfavour, neither love nor hatred. I am the same towards all beings : see, Jājali, that is my vow. I have equal balances² for all beings, O Jājali.....If one fears no being, and no being fears one, if one has preference for nobody and hates nobody, then he becomes united with Brahman....."

Then follows a long explanation of *Ahiṃsā*, the commandment of non-violence. There is no higher law than forbearance towards all living beings. Therefore the breeding of cattle is cruel, because it involves the torturing and killing of animals. Cruel, too, is the keeping of slaves, and traffic in living creatures. Even agriculture is full of sin, for the plough wounds the earth and kills many innocent animals. Jājali objects that without agriculture and cattle-breeding people could not exist and could not find food, and that sacrifices, too, would be impossible if animals might not be killed and plants not be destroyed. Thereupon Tulādhāra replies with a long discourse upon the true sacrifice, which should be offered without the desire for reward, without priestly deception, and without the killing of living beings. Finally Tulādhāra calls on the birds which had nested in the hair of Jājali's head as witnesses for his doctrine, and they, too, confirm that the true religion consists in forbearance towards all human beings.

The sharp contrast between the brahmanical morality and that of Indian asceticism can nowhere be so well observed as in the Dialogue between Father and Son,³ in which the father represents the standpoint of the Brahman, and the son

¹ *Maitra* (in the Pāli of the Buddhists, *metta*) means 'friendship' and is the technical expression for *love towards all beings*, which differs from the Christian brotherly love in extending beyond human beings to the animals also.

² The name of the pedlar, *Tulādhāra*, signifies : 'He who holds the scales'.

³ XII, 175, repeated in but slightly different wording in XII, 277 ; translated into English by J. Muir, *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers*, pp. 28-32 ; into German by Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*, pp. 118-122.

that of the ascetic who has severed himself from the priestly religion. The view of life represented by the son is that of the Buddhists and the Jainas,¹ without, however, being limited to these. It would be premature to declare the dialogue, of which a partial translation here follows, or even only single verses of it, to be 'Buddhistic' or 'borrowed from the Buddhists' :

A Brahman, who took delight in learning the Veda, had an intelligent son, *Intelligent* (Medhāvin) by name. This son, who was learned in all things pertaining to salvation, morality and practical life, and saw clearly into the true nature of the world, spoke in this wise to his father, who took delight in learning the Veda :

Son

"Since soon the days of mortals end,
How ought the wise their lives to spend ?
What course should I, to duty true,
My sire, from youth to age pursue ?

Father

"Begin thy course with study ; store
The mind with holy Vedic lore.
That stage completed,—seek a wife,
And gain the fruit of wedded life,
A race of sons by rites to seal,
When thou art gone, thy spirit's weal.
Then light the sacred fires, and bring
The gods a fitting offering.
When age draws nigh, the world forsake,
Thy chosen home the forest make ;
And there, a calm, ascetic sage,
A war against thy passions wage,
That, cleansed from every earthly stain,
Thou may'st supreme perfection gain."²

¹ Almost every verse which is uttered by the son here in the *Mahābhārata* could just as well occur in a Buddhistic or Jainistic text. As a matter of fact XII, 174, 7-9, does recur in the Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra (14, 21-23) of the Jainas, and XII, 174, 13 corresponds almost literally with the verses of the Buddhist Dhammapada, 47 f. A similar dialogue occurs also in the Jātaka No. 539, cf. J. Charpentier, ZDMG., 62, 1908, 725 ff.

² That is the brahmanical doctrine of the Āśramas, s. above, p. 203.

*Son*

"And art thou then, my father, wise,
 When thou dost such a life advise ?
 What wise or thoughtful man delights
 In formal studies, empty rites ?
 Should such pursuits and thoughts engage
 A mortal more than half his age ?
 The world is ever vexed, distressed ;
 The noiseless robbers never rest.

Father

"Tell how the world is vexed, distressed ;
 What noiseless robbers never rest ?
 What means thy dark, alarming speech ?
 In plainer words thy meaning teach.

Son

"The world is vexed by death ; decay
 The frames of mortal wears away.
 Dost thou not note the circling flight
 Of those still robbers, day and night,
 With stealthy tread which hurrying past,
 Steal all our lives away at last ?
 When well I know how death infests
 This world of woe, and never rests,
 How can I still, in thoughtless mood,
 Confide in future earthly good ?
 Since life with every night that goes,
 Still shorter, and yet shorter grows,
 Must not the wise perceive how vain
 Are all their days that yet remain ?
 We, whom life's narrow bounds confine,
 Like fish in shallow water, pine.

While men on other thoughts are bent,—
 Like those on gathering flowers intent,—
 As lambs by wolves are snatched away,—
 They fall to death a sudden prey,
 Before they yet the good have gained
 For which they every nerve had strained.



No moment lose ; in serious mood
Begin at once to practise good ;
To-morrow's task to-day conclude ;

The evening's work complete at noon :—
No duty can be done too soon.
Who knows whom death may seize to-night ?
And who shall see the morning light ?
And death will never stop to ask,
If thou hast done, or not, thy task.
While yet a youth, from folly cease ;
Through virtue seek for calm and peace.
So shalt thou here attain renown,
And future bliss thy lot shall crown.

Death interrupts the futile dreams
Of men who, plunged in various schemes,
Are thinking : 'This or that is done ;
This still to do ; that just begun.'
As torrents undermine the ranks
Of stately trees that crown their banks,
And sweep them downwards to the main,
Death tears from earth those dreamers vain.

While some are all on traffic bent,
And some on household cares intent,
Are fighting hard with pressing need,
And struggling wives and babes to feed,
Or with some other ills of life
Are waging an incessant strife ;
Death these hard toiling men uproots,
Before they yet have reaped the fruits
Of all their labour, all their thought,
Of all the battles they have fought.

Death spares no class, no rank, no age ;
He carries off the fool, the sage,
The knave, the saint, the young, the old,
The weak, the strong, the faint, the bold.

As soon as men are born, decay
And death begin to haunt their way.
How can'st thou, thoughtless, careless, rest,
When endless woes thy life infest ;
When pains and pangs thy strength consume,—
Thy frame to dissolution doom ?



Forsake the busy haunts of men,
For there has death his favourite den.
In lonely forests seek thy home,
For there the gods delight to roam.

Fast bound by old attachment's spell,
Men love amid their kin to dwell,
This bond the sage asunder tears ;
The fool to rend it never dares.

Thou dost advise that I should please
With sacrifice the deities.
Such rites I disregard as vain ;
Through these can none perfection gain.
Why sate the gods, at cruel feasts,
With flesh and blood of slaughtered beasts ?
Far other sacrifices I
Will offer unremittingly ;
The sacrifice of calm, of truth,
The sacrifice of peace, of ruth,
Of life serenely, purely, spent,
Of thought profound on Brahma bent.
Who offers these, may death defy,
And hope for immortality.

And then thou say'st that I should wed,
And sons should gain to tend-me, dead,
By offering pious gifts, to seal,
When I am gone, my spirit's weal.
But I shall ask no pious zeal
Of sons to guard my future weal.
No child of mine shall ever boast
His rites have saved his father's ghost."¹

There is no greater treasure for the Brahman than solitude, equanimity, truth, virtue, steadfastness, mildness, uprightness, and the renunciation of all dealings. How shall treasures, relatives, or a wife, profit thee, O Brahman, as thou must die ? Seek the self (the ātman) which is hidden within thee ! Whither have thy ancestor, whither has thy father departed ?"

Thus this dialogue, apparently moving entirely in Buddhistic ranges of thought, leads into the ātman-theory of the Vedānta, with which we became acquainted in the

¹ Translated by J. Muir, *loc cit.*

Upaniṣads. And this is by no means remarkable. The ancient Indian sects of ascetics hardly differed more distinctly from one another than, for instance, the various Protestant sects in Great Britain to-day. It is therefore no wonder that, in the edifying stories, dialogues and maxims of the ascetic poetry which has been embodied in the *Mahābhārata*, there are to be found so many thoughts which are in accord with the Upaniṣads, as well as with the sacred texts of the Buddhists and the Jains.

THE DIDACTIC SECTIONS OF THE MAHABHARATA¹

Most of the Itihāsas and Itihāsa-saṃvādas discussed in the preceding chapter are to be found in the numerous and extensive didactic sections of the *Mahābhārata*. Such sections, now shorter, now longer, are scattered in almost all the books of the *Mahābhārata*, and they deal with the three things which the Indians term *Nīti*, i.e., worldly wisdom, especially for kings, therefore also 'politics', *Dharma*, i.e., systematic law as well as general morality, and *Mokṣa*, i.e., 'liberation', as the final aim of all philosophy. These things are, however, not always presented in the form of pleasing narratives and beautiful sayings; we also find long sections containing dry-as-dust discussions, especially upon philosophy in *Book XII* and upon law in *Book XIII*.

It may already be seen from our outline of the contents that *Books XII* and *XIII* have nothing at all to do with the actual epic, but that the events related in *Book XIV* are connected directly with the end of *Book XI*. The interpolation of these two extensive books is made possible by the singular legend which we have already considered above. Bhīṣma, pierced by countless arrows, lies on the battle-field, but, as he can determine the hour of his death for himself, decides to die half a year later.² The intervening period is used by

¹ On the style and contents of these didactic sections cf. O. Strauss, ZDMG., 62, 1908, pp. 661 ff., and *Ethische Probleme aus dem Mahābhārata*, Firenze 1912 (from GSAI., 24, 1911).

² Cf. above, p. 319, Note 1. V. V. Iyer, *Notes of a Study of the Preliminary Chapters of the Mahābhārata*, pp. 271 ff.; and Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 76 ff., Hopkins, *Great Epic of India*, pp. 381 ff., applies to these books (XII, XIII) the term 'pseudo-epic'.



the mortally wounded hero, who is at the same time a lawyer, a theologian, and a yogin, to lecture Yudhiṣṭhira upon philosophy, morality and law. *Book XII* begins with Yudhiṣṭhira being in despair because so many brave warriors and near relatives have been massacred. He bursts out into self-accusations, and resolves, in his despair, to withdraw from the world and end his life as a forest hermit. The brothers try to dissuade him from it, and this gives rise to long detailed discussions whether renunciation and retirement from the world, or whether the fulfilment of the duties of a householder and king are right. The wise Vyāsa also is present, and declares that a king should first fulfil all his duties, and retire into the forest only in the evening of his life. However, he refers Yudhiṣṭhira to Bhīṣma, who will instruct him fully in all the duties of a king. So Yudhiṣṭhira, after he has been consecrated as king, actually goes with a great retinue to Bhīṣma, who is still lying on the battle-field, in order to question him first upon the duties of a king, and further upon other matters. The speeches of Bhīṣma upon law, morality and philosophy fill *Books XII and XIII*.

The first half of *Book XII* (*Śānti Parvan*), consisting of the two sections 'Instruction in a king's duties' and 'Instruction in the law in cases of distress and danger',¹ deals above all with the dignity and duties of a king, teachings of politics (*nīti*) being occasionally inserted, and further also with the duties of the four castes and the four stages of life (*āśramas*) generally, with duties towards parents and teachers, the right conduct in distress and danger, self-restraint, asceticism and love of truth, the relationship between the three aims of life,² and so on. The second half of the book, containing the section of the "Instruction in the duties which lead to liberation,"³ is principally of philosophical content. Yet we find here besides long, dry and often confused discussions upon cosmogony, psychology, the principles of ethics or the

¹ Rājadharmānuśāsanaparvan (1-130) and Āpaddharmānuśāsanaparvan (131-173).

² Dharma, artha and kāma, cf. above, p. 285 Note.

³ Mokṣadharmānuśāsa (174 ff.), completely translated in Deussen's *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*.

doctrine of liberation, many of the most beautiful legends, parables, dialogues and moral aphorisms, some of which have already been discussed in the preceding chapter. And though this *Book XII* as a whole only presents an inartistically jumbled compilation, it yet contains many a priceless gem of poetry and wisdom. This book is of inestimable value, too, as a source for Indian philosophy.

While *Book XII* can be termed, in a certain sense, a 'manual of philosophy', *Book XIII* (*Anuśāsana-Parvan*) is essentially nothing but a manual of law. Indeed, there are large portions in this book which contain nothing but quotations from, or exact parallels to, well-known law-books, e.g., that of *Manu*. We shall see in a later section that Indian legal literature, too, consists mainly of metrical text-books and can be classed as didactic poetry. The only distinction between *Book XIII* of the *Mahābhārata* and the law-books (*Dharmaśāstras*) is that in the former the dry presentation is frequently interrupted by the narration of legends, which indeed are mostly extremely silly and insipid.¹ While *Book XII*, even though it did not belong to the original epic, yet was probably inserted at a comparatively early date, there can be no doubt with regard to *Book XIII*, that it was made a component part of the *Mahābhārata* at a still later time. It bears all the marks of a later fabrication. Nowhere in the *Mahābhārata*, to mention only one thing, are the claims of the Brahmans to supremacy over all other strata of society vindicated in such an arrogant and exaggerated manner as in *Book XIII*. A large part of the book deals with the *Dānadharma*, i.e., the laws and precepts upon generosity; generosity, however, is always to be understood only in the sense of the giving of presents to the Brahmans.

Besides in these two books, and apart from smaller passages not exceeding one or two cantos, we also find large didactic sections in *Books III, V, VI, XI* and *XIV*. We find in *Book III* (28-33) a long conversation between Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma upon ethical questions, in which

¹ Of the kind quoted above, pp. 354 f.



Draupadi quotes a dialogue between Bali and Prahlāda and a 'Niti of Brhaspati'.¹ In the same book we find (205-216) the dissertations of *Mārkaṇḍeya* upon the virtues of women (205 f.), upon forbearance towards living beings (*Ahimsā*, 206-208), upon the power of destiny, renunciation of the world and liberation, upon doctrines of the *Sāṃkhya* philosophy (210) and of the *Vedānta* (211), upon the duties towards parents (214 ff.) and others. *Book V* contains long lectures of *Vidura* upon morality and worldly wisdom (33-40) and the philosophical doctrines of the eternally young *Sanatsujāta* (41-46). In *Book VI* (25-42) we meet with the famous *Bhagavadgītā*, to which the *Anugītā* in *Book XIV* (16-51) forms a kind of continuation or supplement.² The consolatory speeches of *Vidura* in *Book XI* (2-7) again move in the province of ethics.

Of all these didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata*, none has attained to such popularity and fame as the *Bhagavadgītā*³ or the 'Lord's Song'. In India itself there is scarcely any book which is read so much and esteemed so highly as the *Bhagavadgītā*. It is the sacred book of the *Bhāgavatas*, a *Viṣṇuite* sect, but it is a book of devotion and edification for every Hindu, to whatever sect he may belong. The historian *Kalhana*⁴ relates of a king of Kashmir, *Avantivarman*, who died in 883 A. D., that in the hour of his death he had the *Bhagavadgītā* read to him from beginning to end whereupon, thinking of *Viṣṇu's* heavenly abode, he gladly yielded up his spirit. And he was not the only Hindu to find consolation in this book in the hour of his death. There are many educated Hindus to-day who know the whole poem from memory. Countless are the manuscripts of it which have been preserved. And since it was printed for the first time in the year 1809 in Calcutta, hardly a year elapses without

¹ III, 32, 61.

² The three philosophical poems *Bhagavadgītā*, *Sanatsujātīya* and *Anugītā* have been translated into English by Kāshināth Trimbak Telang in *SBE.*, Vol. 8, and into German by Deussen, *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*.

³ The full title is *Bhagavadgītā upaniṣadāḥ*, "the esoteric doctrines delivered by the Exalted one". *Bhagavat* "the Exalted one, the Adorable", is the epithet of the God *Viṣṇu* incarnated as *Kṛṣṇa*, who recites to *Arjuna* the doctrines contained in the poem. Besides, *Bhagavadgītā* the short title *Gītā* (i.e., 'the song' *par excellence*) is current in India.

⁴ *Rājatarāṅgi*, V, 125.

a new reprint of the work appearing in India. Countless also are the translations into modern Indian languages.

Outside India, too, the *Bhagavadgītā* has gained many admirers. The Arabian traveller Albērūnī knew the poem perfectly and appreciated it very highly.¹ In Europe the poem was first made known by means of the English translation by Chas. Wilkins (London, 1785). The critical text-edition by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, which appeared in 1823, with a Latin translation appended, was of great importance. It was through this work that Wilhelm von Humboldt became acquainted with the poem, and his great enthusiasm about it has already been mentioned.² He placed the *Bhagavadgītā* far above Lucretius and even above Parmenides and Empedokles, and declared "that this episode of the *Mahābhārata* is the most beautiful, nay perhaps even the only truly philosophical poem which we can find in all the literatures known to us." Wilhelm von Humboldt dealt in detail with the poem in a long dissertation of the Berlin Academy (1825-26), *Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavadgītā bekannte Episode des Mahābhārata*,³ and in a lengthy review of Schlegel's edition and translation.⁴ It was translated repeatedly into European languages.⁵

The poem is to be found in a place where one would least of all expect it, at the beginning of *Book VI*, where the descriptions of the great fight commence. All preparations for the battle have been made. The two armies confront each other ready for the fray. Then Arjuna lets his war-chariot halt between the two armies and surveys the hosts of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas armed for the fight. And as he sees on both sides "fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles

¹ See E. C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, I, p. xxxviii ; II, Index s.v. *Gītā*.

² See above, p. 15. Cf. *Ges. Werke* of W. v. Humboldt, I, pp. 96 and 111.

³ Also *Ges. Werke*, I, 26-109.

⁴ In Schlegel's *Indische Bibliothek*, Vol. II, 1824, pp. 218 ff., 328 ff. Also *Ges. Werke*, I, 110-184.

⁵ English translations by J. C. Thomson, Hertford, 1855 ; K. T. Telang (in verse, Bombay, 1875 ; prose in SBE., Vol. 8) ; John Davies (1882) ; Edwin Arnold (1885) ; C. C. Caleb (1911) ; L. D. Barnett (in Temple Classics). Sanskrit text with English Translation by Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das, Benares, 1905. German translations by C. R. S. Peiper (1869) ; F. Lorinser (1869) ; R. Boxberger (1870) ; P. Deussen (in *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*) ; R. Garbe (1905, 2nd ed. 1921) ; and L. v. Schroeder (Jena, 1912). For other translations both in Indian vernaculars and in European languages s. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, II, 129 ff.



and brothers, sons and grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law and companions", he is overcome by a feeling of deepest pity ; horror seizes him at the thought that he is to fight against relatives and friends ; it appears to him sin and madness to intend to murder those for whose very sake one otherwise goes to war. When Kṛṣṇa reproaches him with weakness and soft-heartedness Arjuna declares that he is quite at a loss, that he does not know whether it is better to be victorious or to be defeated, and finally he implores Kṛṣṇa to instruct him as to what he should really do in this conflict of duties. Thereupon Kṛṣṇa answers him with a detailed philosophical discourse,¹ whose immediate purpose is to convince Arjuna that it is his duty as a warrior to fight, whatever the consequences may be. Thus he says :

"Thou hast grieved over them for whom grief is unmeet, though thou speakest words of understanding. The learned grieve not for them whose lives are fled nor for them whose lives are not fled.

Never have I not been never hast thou and never have these princes of men not been ; and never shall time yet come when we shall not all be.

As the Body's Tenant goes through childhood and manhood and old age in this body, so does it pass to other bodies ; the wise man is not confounded therein.....

It is these bodies of the everlasting, unperishing, incomprehensible Body-Dweller that have an end, as it is said. Therefore, fight, O thou of Bharata's race.

He who deems This to be a slayer, and he who thinks This to be slain, are alike without discernment ; This slays not, neither is it slain.

This never is born, and never dies, nor may it after being come again to be not ; this unborn, everlasting, abiding Ancient is not slain when the body is slain.....

As a man lays aside outworn garments and takes others that are new, so the Body-Dweller puts away outworn bodies and goes to others that are new.

Weapons cleave not This, fire burns not This, waters wet not This, wind dries it not

Unshown is This called, unthinkable This, unalterable This ; therefore, knowing it in this wise, thou dost not well to grieve....."²

¹ On the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* see R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*, (Grundriss III, 6), pp. 14 ff. ; and J. E. Carpenter, *Theism in Mediaeval India*, London, 1921, pp. 250 ff. Some less known monographs on the *Gītā* are discussed by P. E. Pavolini, *GSAI.*, 24, 1911, pp. 395 ff.

² II, 11-13, 18-20, 22, 23, 25, translated by L. D. Barnett,

So Kṛṣṇa says : There is no cause for mourning over the imminent murder, for *man* himself, *i.e.*, the *spirit*, is eternal and indestructible, it is only the bodies which are destroyed.¹ And from this he leads on to exhort Arjuna to go forth into the righteous war in the spirit of his duty as a warrior. Happy the warrior to whose lot such a fight falls, which opens the gates of Heaven for him ! If he does not fight he burdens himself with shame worse than death. If he falls in the battle, he is assured of heaven ; if he is victorious he will rule the earth. Therefore he must in any case fight. However, all the subsequent explanations of the *sage* Kṛṣṇa and later of the *god*, for in the course of the poem it is more and more the *god* Kṛṣṇa who speaks to Arjuna, are in irreconcilable contradiction to this speech of the *hero* Kṛṣṇa. For all the other expositions of the *Bhagavadgītā* upon the ethics of action culminate in the doctrine that man should, indeed, act according to his duty, but without any consideration for success or failure, without troubling about the possible reward. For it is only such *desire-less* action which is to a certain extent compatible with the real ethical ideal which consists in the giving-up of all works, in non-action, in complete renunciation of the world. In fact, in spite of this, there still runs through the whole poem an unsolved contradiction between the quietistic *morality of asceticism* which points to meditation pursued quite apart from the world and the striving for the highest knowledge as the way to salvation, and the *morality of action* which, at least among the philosophers, has never been properly acknowledged in India. It is true that Kṛṣṇa teaches that there exist two paths to salvation, the path of knowledge and the path of action. But so long as the spirit is bound to the body, it would only be hypocrisy to say that man can live without performing actions.

¹ There is no murder or act of violence which could not be justified by this miserable sophistry. It is surprising that the pious readers of the *Gītā* do not see this. On the unsolved and insoluble contradiction between the principles of the *Gītā* and the morality of war forming the starting-point of Kṛṣṇa's speeches, see W. L. Hare, *Mysticism of East and West*, London, 1923, pp. 159 ff.



For matter is always connected with *Guṇas*¹ (constituents)—*sattva* (lightness, goodness), *rajas* (energy, passion), *tamas* (darkness, heaviness, ignorance)—through which of necessity actions arise. All that man can do, therefore, is to fulfil his duty without wishes, without desires. For “as the fire is concealed by smoke, as the mirror is covered by dirt, as an embryo is protected by the amnion, so knowledge is surrounded by desire, that eternal enemy of the knower.”² Therefore, he who acts without desire approaches the most closely to the real ideal, which lies on the path of knowledge. How high the *Bhagavadgītā* places knowledge as a way to salvation is shown by these verses (IV, 36 f.) :

“Even if you are the most sinful of all sinful men, you will cross over all trespasses by means of the boat of knowledge alone. As a fire well kindled, O Arjuna ! reduces fuel to ashes, so the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes.”³

And according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, too, he who, turned away entirely from all earthly things, strives for knowledge in meditation only, is a *yogin*, the ideal of the saint and the sage. The *yogin* maintains his calmness of soul “in cold and heat, in joy and sorrow, in honour and dishonour”. A block of earth, a stone and a lump of gold are alike in value to him. He is one and the same to friends and foes, to strangers and relatives, to good people and bad. Sitting in a lonely place deep in contemplation, “he gazes without moving, at the tip of his nose. ‘As a light does not flicker in a place where there is no wind’ : that is the simile, known from of old, for the *yogin*, who curbs his thoughts and yields himself entirely to absorption (*yoga*).”⁴ But while in the Upaniṣads meditation and thought are regarded as the only path to knowledge and salvation, the *Bhagavadgītā* knows yet another path, that of *Bhakti*, i.e., love and devotion

¹ On the Sāṃkhya doctrine of the three guṇas s. R. Garbe, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1917, pp. 272 ff.; and S. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, I, pp. 243 ff.

² III, 38 f.

³ Translated by K. T. Telang, SBE., Vol. 8, p. 62.

⁴ VI, 7-19. In a letter to Gentz, Wilh. v. Humboldt writes that the former will understand how deeply the Indian poem must have impressed him. “For I am not so unlike the *absorbed ones* (i.e., *yogins*) who are described in it.” (*Schriften von Friedrich von Gentz*, published by G. Schlesier. Mannheim, 1840, V, p. 300.)

towards God.¹ In answer to the question of Arjuna whether he who is unable to lend his spirit absolutely and entirely to abstraction is lost, Kṛṣṇa replies : "No one who has done good is quite lost." He who has done his duty in this world, is after death born again according to his merits, in a good, pious family, and after several rebirths gradually obtains the capability of becoming a yogin. "And even among all devotees," says Kṛṣṇa,² "he who, being full of faith, worships me, with his inmost self intent on me, is esteemed by me to be the most devoted." Out of the *love of God* arises the

¹ It is this idea of *Bhakti* which, more than anything else in the *Bhagavadgītā*, reminds us of *Christian* ranges of thought. Elsewhere too, the accord with *Christian* ideas is so marked that the attempt of F. Lorinser, in the appendix to his translation (Breslau, 1869), to prove *Christian* influence in the *Bhagavadgītā*, must not be repudiated from the outset. But Lorinser's thorough investigation in itself proves that this is parallelism of development, highly interesting for the history of religion, and not a case of borrowing. Lorinser is convinced "that the author of the *Bhagavadgītā* not only knew and frequently utilised the scriptures of the *New Testament*, but also wove into his system *Christian* ideas and views in general", and he wishes to prove "that this much-admired monument of the ancient Indian mind, this most beautiful and most exalted didactic poem, which can be regarded as one of the most precious blossoms of heathen philosophy, owes its purest and most highly praised doctrines for the most part" to *Christian* sources. Guided by such tendencies, Lorinser has compared *everything* which in any way admits of comparison. But of the more than a hundred passages from the Gospels which Lorinser quotes as parallel with passages in the *Bhagavadgītā*, I have found twenty-five at the most that are of such a kind that a case of borrowing could be at all thought of. Not in one single instance, however, is the resemblance such that the supposition of borrowing were more probable than that of an accidental agreement. Mystical love towards God, too, is not limited to *Christianity*. I need refer only to *Sufism*, in which it plays no less a part than with the *Christian* mystics. The expositions of Lorinser have indeed convinced few Indologists up to the present. Even A. Weber, who himself (*Griechen in Indien*, SBA., 1890, p. 930) traces *Bhakti* back to *Christian* influences, is of opinion that Lorinser goes too far. E. W. Hopkins (*India, Old and New*, New York, 1902, 146 ff.) is the only scholar who expressed a decided opinion in favour of the theory that the *Bhagavadgītā* was influenced by *Christianity*. G. Howells (*The Soul of India*, London, 1913, 425 ff.) compares the doctrines of the *Gītā* with those of the *New Testament*, and seeks to trace points of agreement, without asserting that the *Gītā* was dependent on *Christianity*. Most scholars agree that the doctrine of *Bhakti* can be explained by earlier Indian teachings, and that the hypothesis of *Christian* influence on the *Bhagavadgītā* is unlikely, on historical grounds. Cf. J. Muir, *Ind. Ant.*, 4, 1875, pp. 77 ff.; A. Barth, *RHR.*, 11, 1885, pp. 57 f. ('Oeuvres' I, 370 f.) and *The Religions of India*, transl., London, 1889, 220 f.; J. van den Gheyn, *Le Muséon* 17, 1898, pp. 57 ff.; L. J. Sedgwick, *JBRAS.*, 23, 1910, 111 ff.; A. B. Keith, *JRAS.*, 1907, 490 ff.; Grierson, *ERE*. II (1909), pp. 547 ff.; and esp. R. Garbe, *Die Bhagavadgītā* (2nd Ed.), pp. 66 ff., and *Indien und das Christentum*, 1914, pp. 227 ff.

² VI, 47. Transl. by K. T. Telang, *SBE.*, Vol. 8, p. 73.



knowledge of God, and true liberation. Kṛṣṇa teaches this again and again :

“Even if a very ill-conducted man worships me, not worshipping any one else, he must certainly be deemed to be good, for he has well resolved. He soon becomes devout of heart, and obtains lasting tranquillity. (You may) affirm, O son of Kuntī ! that my devotee is never ruined. For, O son of Pṛthā ! even those who are of sinful birth, women, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras likewise, resorting to me, attain the supreme goal. What then (need be said of) holy Brahmans and royal saints who are (my) devotees ?.....”¹

The moral action and all the virtues of the yogin, too, gain their chief value through the love of God :

“Hateless toward all born beings, friendly, and pitiful, void of the thought of a Mine and an I, bearing indifferently pain and pleasure, patient,

ever content, the Man of the Rule subdued of spirit and steadfast of purpose, who has set mind and understanding on Me and worships Me, is dear to Me.

He before whom the world is not dismayed and who is not dismayed before the world, who is void of joy, impatience, fear and dismay, desireless, pure, skilful, impartial, free from terrors, who renounces all undertakings and worships Me, is dear to Me.”²

The kernel of all the ethical teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, is contained in the verse which the commentators rightly call the ‘quintessence verse’ :

“He who does My work, who is given over to Me, who is devoted to Me, void of attachment, without hatred to any born being, O son of Pāṇḍu, comes to Me.”³

Here is also expressed what according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, constitutes liberation or the highest good : coming to, or union with, God. This is to be understood “as elevation of the soul to a god-like state, as individual perpetuation in the presence of God”⁴ ?

There are, then, *three* paths which lead to this goal : the path of dutiful, desireless action, the path of knowledge, and the path of the love of God. And it is at least attempted,

¹ IX, 30-33. Transl. by K. T. Telang, SBE., Vol. 8, p. 85.

² XII, 13-16. Transl. by L. D. Barnett.

³ XI, 55. Transl. by L. D. Barnett.

⁴ Garbe, *Die Bhagavadgītā* (2nd Ed.), p. 65.

though not always successfully, to bring the three paths into harmony with one another. The first path can, indeed, be combined with the third, and the love of God leads to the knowledge of God, thus meeting the second path. Thus the contradictions in the ethical teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* can to a certain extent be overcome.¹

There are, however, other contradictions in the poem staring us in the face at every turn. Kṛṣṇa invariably speaks of himself as a *personal god*, as the creator, who is eternal and imperishable, but is nevertheless born into the world or creates himself at such times when a decrease in religion is imminent ; this is especially the case in the passages dealing with bhakti (IV, 5 ff.). In other places, again, he teaches that *he* is in all beings, and all beings are in *him* (VI, 30 f.). "This All is strung on me, like pearls on a string. I am the taste in the water, O son of Kuntī, I am the light in the sun and moon, the syllable Om in all the Vedas, the sound in the atmosphere and the bravery in men", etc. (VII, 7 ff.). This doctrine, according to which God is separate from the world, though at the same time immanent in it, is taught as a great secret (IX, 1 ff.). There is, however, a third category of passages where Kṛṣṇa is not mentioned at all, but which speak quite abruptly of the brahman (neuter) as the sole and highest world principle in the sense of the monism of the Upaniṣads. Moreover, side by side with verses mentioning the Veda in an almost scornful tone (II, 42 ff.), we find other passages recommending the sacrifices prescribed in the Veda, and even describing the sacrifice as 'a magic cow which fulfils all wishes' (III, 10), which is difficult to reconcile with that 'desireless action' that is so often praised.

This doctrine of desireless action is sometimes described by the term *Yoga*. The same term is, however, used to denote various things. The usual meaning is what is generally understood by Yoga in Indian literature, *i.e.*, the doctrine of absorption, and of the methods by which man can withdraw from the sense-world and become entirely absorbed in the

¹ Otto Strauss, *Ethische Probleme aus dem Mahābhārata*, Firenze, 1912 (GSAI., 24, 1911), pp. 309 ff., gives a good summary of the ethics of the *Gītā*, which he presents as a compromise between the contradictory doctrines.



deity. It is in this sense that the *Bhagavadgītā* is sometimes called a *Yogaśāstra*, or manual of Yoga. This 'practical philosophy' of the yoga has its psychological and metaphysical foundation in the *Sāṃkhya*.¹ The *Sāṃkhya*, however, teaches differentiation between spirit (*puruṣa*) and matter (*prakṛti*), plurality of souls, and independence and eternity of matter, and explains the creation as an unfolding of the world from original matter. Now all these are doctrines diametrically opposed to the doctrine of unity taught by the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta. In spite of this, the passages dealing with the brahman, teach the doctrine of universal unity as well.

How can all these contradictions be explained? Scholars are by no means unanimous on this point. Some are content to say that all these contradictions simply result from the fact that the *Bhagavadgītā* is not a systematic philosophical work, but a mystical poem, and that, in the words of Franklin Edgerton, the most decided and consistent exponent of this opinion, it is "poetic, mystical, and devotional, rather than logical and philosophical". W. von Humboldt had already said: "It is a sage, speaking out of the fulness and inspiration of his knowledge and of his feeling, not a philosopher trained in a school, classifying his material in accordance with a definite method, and arriving at the last principles of his doctrine by a skilful chain-work of ideas."² On the other hand, other scholars maintain that there are limits even for mystical poetry, and that the contradictions in the *Gītā* can better be explained by the assumption that the

¹ In V, 4 f., it is explained with great emphasis that *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* are one. In XVIII, 13, *sāṃkhye kṛtānte* cannot mean anything but 'in the *Sāṃkhya* system'. In XVIII, 19, *gūṇasāṃkhyāna* is explained by Śaṅkara as *Kāpila Śāstra*. Kapila, the founder of the *Sāṃkhya* system, is called the first of the perfect sages, in X, 26.

² Ueber die unter dem Namen *Bhagavadgītā* bekannte Episode des *Mahābhārata*, 1825 ('Gesammelte Schriften' V, p. 325). The following take up more or less the same point of view: K. T. Telang, SBE., Vol. 8, pp. 11 ff.; E. W. Hopkins, JRAS., 1905, pp. 384 ff. and *Cambridge History* I, 273; L. v. Schroeder in the Introduction to his German translation; B. Faddegon, *Caṅkara's Gītābhāṣya, toegelicht en beoordeeld, Diss.*, Amsterdam, 1906, pp. 12 ff.; D. van Hinloopen Labberton, ZDMG., 66, 1912, 603 f.; R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 157 ff.; O. Strauss, *Ethische Probleme aus dem Mahābhārata*. (GSAL., 24, 1911), p. 310; ZDMG., 67, 1913, 714 ff.; A. B. Keith, JRAS., 1913, p. 197, 1915; p. 548; H. Oldenberg, NGGW., 1919, 321 ff., and *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 39, 43, 70 ff.; J. N. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, London 1920, pp. 90 f.; H. Jacobi, DLZ., 1921, 715 ff.; 1922, 266 ff.; F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita interpreted*, Chicago, 1925.

poem has not come down to us in its original form, but like most parts of the *Mahābhārata* has only received its present form as a result of interpolations and revisions. Some scholars had assumed that the *Bhagavadgītā* had originally been a pantheistic poem, which was remodelled later by the devotees of Viṣṇu into a theistic poem. This is very improbable, for in spite of all the contradictions the whole character of the work is predominantly theistic. God appears as an essentially personal god, who, as a teacher, and in human incarnation, requires devotion (*bhakti*) of his worshippers.

Taking this for granted, R. Garbe¹ made a direct attempt to reconstruct the original poem, by printing in small type in his translation all verses which he considers unauthentic *i.e.*, interpolated from the view-point of the Vedānta philosophy and the orthodox brahmanical religion. I was formerly in entire agreement with Garbe.² However, after repeated readings of the *Gītā* and the most thorough investigation of the passages cut out by Garbe, I have come to the conclusion that even the original poem did not teach pure theism, but theism tinged with pantheism. I do not now believe that we are justified in pronouncing as interpolated all those passages where Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself as immanent in the world, as for instance the beautiful verses VII, 7 ff. On the other hand, I still agree with Garbe that those passages where mention is suddenly made of the *brahman* (neut.) without any reference to Kṛṣṇa whatsoever, are interpolated (*e.g.*, II, 72, V, 6, 7, 10 ; VII, 29—VIII 4 etc.), as well as the passages where ritual and sacrifices are recommended or glorified (*e.g.*, III, 9-18 ; IX, 16-19 etc.). I think, too that the original *Bhagavadgītā* was much shorter, and that the work in its present form contains many more interpolations and additions than are assumed by Garbe. The very fact that the *Bhagavadgītā* contains exactly 18

¹ In his translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, s. also ERE., II, 535 ff. and DLZ., 1922, 98 ff. ; 605 f.

² Also F. O. Schrader, ZDMG., 64, 340, and A. Hillebrandt, GGA., 1915, p. 628, agree with Garbe. Grierson, too (ERE, II, 540 f. ; *Ind. Ant.*, 37, 1908, 257) agrees with Garbe in counting the passages where 'Brahmaism' is taught, among the 'later' portions of the *Gītā*. The scholars mentioned in Note 2 are the opponents of the view adopted by Garbe.

Adhyāyas, just as the *Mahābhārata* is divided into 18 Parvans and as there are 18 Purāṇas, is suspicious.¹ Canto XI, where Kṛṣṇa reveals himself to Arjuna in his godlike form, is of the nature of a Purāṇa rather than like the work of the poet of the first sections. It is this very conviction of mine that the author of the original *Gītā* was a great poet, that makes me hesitate to attribute to him such verses as XI, 26 ff., where the heroes of the epic are visioned as hanging between the teeth of the god,—a vision by which a further excuse for the killing of the enemy is added to those already given in Canto II: namely, Arjuna need not hesitate to kill the enemies, because in reality they have “already been killed (by God)”.²

There can hardly be any doubt that the *Bhagavadgītā* did not belong to the original heroic poem. It is scarcely imaginable that an epic poet would make his heroes hold a philosophical conversation of 650 verses in the midst of the description of a battle. In all probability the original epic included only a very short dialogue between Arjuna and the hero and charioteer (not the god) Kṛṣṇa. This dialogue was, as it were, the germ from which the present didactic poem grew.³ This didactic poem was originally, by its very nature, a text of the Bhāgavatas, wherein the doctrine of bhakti in conjunction with the yoga doctrine of desireless action was taught on the foundation of the Sāṃkhya. There is evidence from inscriptions that, as early as the beginning of the 2nd century B. C. the religion of the Bhāgavatas had found adherents even among the Greeks in Gandhāra.⁴ It is perhaps not too bold to assume that the old *Bhagavadgītā* was written at

¹ Cf. Hopkins, *Great Epic*, p. 371.

² Those scholars, too, who reject Garbe's views, do not all believe in the unity of the *Gītā*. Hopkins (*Great Epic*, pp. 215, 234 f.) speaks of the *Gītā* as “clearly... .. rewritten by a modernising hand”. Oldenberg too, thinks it likely that the earliest *Gītā* concluded with II, 38 and that Adhyāyas XIII-XVIII are an appendix or appendices (NGGW., 1919, 333 f., 336 f.). See also Strauss, *Ethische Probleme*, pp. 312 f.

³ H. Jacobi (ZDMG., 72, 1918, 323 ff.) has endeavoured to trace in the poem those verses (of Adhyāyas I and II) which belonged to the old epic. But it is not impossible that there was no dialogue whatsoever between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the old heroic poem, and that the whole poem was originally a text independent of the epic, an Upaniṣad, which, was inserted bodily into the epic.

⁴ See J. H. Marshall, JRAS., 1909, pp. 1053 ff.; J. F. Fleet, *ib.*, 1087 ff.; D. R. Bhandarkar, JBRAS., 23, 1910, 104 ff.; R. G. Bhandarkar, *Ind. Ant.*, 41, 1912, pp. 13 ff.; *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc.*, pp. 3 f.; H. Raychaudhuri, *Early History of the Vaishnava Sect*, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 13, 52 f., 58 ff.

about this time as an Upaniṣad of the Bhāgavatas.¹ Its language, style and metre, too, prove the work to be one of the earlier parts of the *Mahābhārata*. There are references to the *Gītā* in later sections of the epic,² and the *Anugītā* (XIV, 16-51) is surely nothing but a late imitation and continuation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, than which it contains a still greater variety of doctrines.

The *Bhagavadgītā* was already known to the poet Bāṇa (in the 7th century A.D.) as a portion of the *Mahābhārata*,³ and side by side with the Upaniṣads and Vedānta-sūtras it formed one of the foundations of the philosophy of Śaṅkara. Most likely it was already in the early centuries A.D. that it received its present form at the hands of orthodox Brahmans; in this form it became and has remained until to-day the most popular religious book for all Hindus. The work owes this great popularity to the very circumstance that the most conflicting philosophical doctrines and religious views are united in it, so that adherents of all schools and sects could make use of it, and even to-day the strictest Brahman is just as much edified by it as the adherent of the Brahmo-Samaj and the believing theosophist under the leadership of Annie Besant.

It is scarcely possible, however, that the *Bhagavadgītā* can have arisen from the start on the basis of syncretism, as the latter only made its appearance more and more in later times. It is certain that the old and authentic *Gītā* was the work of a true and great poet. It is on the strength of its poetic value, the forcefulness of its language, the splendour of the images and metaphors, the breath of inspiration which pervades the poem, that it has made such a deep impression on impressionable minds of all ages; and I am convinced that the poetical beauties as well as the moral value of the

¹ According to K. T. Telang (SBE., Vol. 8, p. 34) the *Gītā* is 'earlier than the third century B.C.', according to R. G. Bhandarkar (*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, p. 13) it is 'not later than the beginning of the fourth century B.C.' I agree with Edgerton when he says (*loc. cit.*, p. 3): "All that we can say is that it was probably composed before the beginning of our era, but not more than a few centuries beyond it."

² XII, 346, 11 with 'Harigītāh' and XII, 348, 8.

³ K. T. Telang, SBE., Vol. 8, p. 28.

poem would find still greater appreciation, had the poem not been disfigured by additions and interpolations.¹

Another text-book of the Bhāgavatas is the Nārāyaṇīya (XII, 334-351); this is certainly a later work than the *Bhagavadgītā*, but even this has been augmented by additions.² It is a work in true purāṇa style, which teaches that perfection can only be attained by bhakti and the grace of God, who appears here under the name of Nārāyaṇa. Here, too, we find the Bhāgavata religion and the philosophy of Sāṃkhya and Yoga mingled with Vedānta ideas. The paradise of the pious devotees of Nārāyaṇa, Śvetadvīpa or 'the white island', is described in very fantastical fashion :

The sage Nārada desires to look upon the only god Nārāyaṇa, whose faithful worshipper he is, in his original nature. He therefore raises himself aloft by the strength of yoga, and reaches the divine mountain Meru. Gazing thence to the north-west, he espies north of the ocean of milk the famous 'white island' lying 32,000 yojanas from Meru. On this island he sees "white men without sense organs, who take no nourishment, whose eyes do not blink, from whom a most pleasant scent emanates, who are free from all sin, at the sight of whom evil men are dazzled, whose bodies are of bone hard as diamond, who are indifferent both to honour and scorn, like unto the children of heaven in form, endowed with shining strength, with heads in the shape of sunshades. Their voice resembles the rushing of torrents of rain, they have four equal testicles, feet like lotus-leaves, sixty white teeth and eight fangs; they lick their sun-like faces with their tongues, and are full of love for God."³

It seems evident that the 'white island' as well as the divine mountain Meru and the ocean of milk, belongs to the province of mythology, and not to that of historical geography. A few scholars have, however, tried to identify the ocean of milk with Lake Issyk-Kul or Lake Balkhash, and the 'white

¹ Attention has of late been called to the fact that, notwithstanding the many beauties and lofty thoughts, the poem has many weak points. Cf. O. Böhtlingk, *Bemerkungen zur Bhagavadgītā* (BSGW., 1897); E. W. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, pp. 390, 399 f., quoted in assent by R. Garbe, *Die Bhagavadgītā*, p. 16; and V. K. Rajwade, *Bhandarkar Com. Vol.*, pp. 325 ff.

² See R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.* pp. 4 ff., Grierson, *Ind. Ant.*, 37, 1908, 251 ff., 373 ff. Translated into German by Deussen, *Philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata*, pp. 748 ff., into Dutch by C. Lecoutere in *Mélanges Charles de Harlez*, Leyden 1896, pp. 162 ff.

³ XII, 335, 6-12. A tongue of this kind also belongs to the 32 characteristics of a Buddha, who, however, has only forty white teeth, e.g., *Suttanipāṭa*, *Selasutta* (SBE., Vol. 10, II, p. 101).

island' with a land of 'white men' in the north, inhabited by Nestorian Christians,¹ so that we should have to assume that there was Christian influence in the Nārāyaṇīya. In my opinion, the description of Śvetadvīpa does not remind us of the Christian Eucharist, but of heavenly regions such as Vaikuṇṭha, Goloka, Kailāsa and the Sukhāvati paradise of the Buddha Amitābha.

Though Sāṃkhya and Yoga stand in the foreground of most of the philosophical sections of the *Mahābhārata*, we nevertheless find everywhere interpolated passages where the Vedānta is taught, and a few longer passages like the *Sanatsujātīya* (V, 41-46) have been inserted with an entirely Vedāntist teaching.² However, as regards poetical value, there is none of the philosophical sections of the *Mahābhārata* which could bear the least comparison with the *Bhagavadgītā*.

On the other hand, many a precious gem of Indian poetry is to be found in those didactic pieces which deal with ethical questions, e.g., the oft-discussed question regarding the relationship of destiny and human action (karman), or contain general ethical doctrines—without regard to any particular philosophical or religious views. The following translations may serve at least as a small sample of the abundance of beauty and wisdom which lies hidden in these verses of the *Mahābhārata* :

"The wound a foeman's trenchant steel
 Inflicts, in time again will heal ;
 The tree a woodman's axe o'erthrows
 Soon sprouts again, and freshly grows ;
 But never more those wounds are closed,
 Which harsh and cutting words have caused."

¹ Cf. J. Kennedy, JRAS., 1907, 481 f., R. Garbe, AR., 16, 1913, 516 ff., and *Indien und das Christentum*, Tübingen, 1914, pp. 192 ff., Grierson, ERE. II, p. 549. On the other hand, s. Winternitz, *Oesterreich. Monatsschrift für den Orient*, 41, 1915, pp. 185 f., and H. Raychaudhuri, *Early History of the Vaishnava Sect*, pp. 79 ff.

² For the philosophical doctrines contained in the *Mahābhārata* s. E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 85-190, J. Dahlmann, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie als Naturlehre und Erlösungslehre nach dem Mahābhārata*, Berlin 1902, P. Deussen, AGPh. I, 3, pp. 8-144. Contrary to Deussen and Dahlmann, I consider it wrong to speak of an 'epic philosophy' as a 'transition philosophy' between the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and that of the later systems. The epic proper has no connection with philosophy at all, and the 'pseudo-epic' contains a mixture of philosophical doctrines belonging to widely different times.



"The gods no club, like herdsmen, wield
To guard the man they deign to shield :
On those to whom they grace will show
They understanding sound bestow ;
But rob of sense and insight all
Of whom their wrath decrees the fall.
These wretched men,—their minds deranged,—
See all they see distorted, changed ;
For good to them as evil looms,
And folly wisdom's form assumes."

"With meekness conquer wrath, and ill with ruth,
By giving niggards vanquish, lies with truth."

"Reviling meet with patience ; ne'er
To men malignant malice bear.
Harsh tones and wrathful language greet
With gentle speech and accents sweet.
When struck return not thou the blow.
Even gods their admiration shew
Of men who thus entreat a foe."

"That foe repel not with a frown
Who claims thy hospitable aid ;
A tree refuses not its shade
To him who comes to hew it down."

"Thou mark'st the faults of other men,
Although as mustard seeds minute ;
Thine own escape thy partial ken,
Though each in size a Bilva fruit."¹

"A man should do with all his might
The good his heart has once designed.
Ne'er let him wrong with wrong requite,
But be to others ever kind."

"The good kind actions recollect,
But base injurious deeds forget ;
On doing good to others set,
They never recompense expect."

“ 'Tis not for gain, for fame, from fear,
That righteous men injustice shun,
And virtuous men hold virtue dear ;
An inward voice they seem to hear
Which tells that duty must be done.”

“Whene'er thy acts the source must be
Of good or ill to other men,
Deal thou with them in all things then
As thou would'st have them deal with thee.”¹

THE HARIVAMSA, AN APPENDIX TO THE MAHABHARATA²

What has been said in the preceding chapters must suffice to give an idea of the *eighteen books* (parvans) of the *Mahābhārata*. The Indians, however, regard also the *Harivaṃśa*, a work which is in reality a Purāṇa and is also occasionally called 'Harivaṃśa-Purāṇa' as part of the *Mahābhārata*. Yet the book is not even by the Indians termed a nineteenth 'Parvan', but a *Khila*, i.e., a supplement or appendix to the *Mahābhārata*. This 'appendix', it is true, is a work of 16,374 verses (Ślokas), that is, longer than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. But its literary value is by no means in direct proportion to its size. It is above all not a 'poem', in no sense the work of any *one poet*, but a jumbled or quite loosely connected mass of texts—legends, myths and hymns—serving for the glorification of the god Viṣṇu. The *Harivaṃśa* is not even the work of *one compiler*. The last third of it is surely only a later appendix to the appendix, and also in the remaining parts of the work many portions were probably inserted at quite different times.

The connection of the *Harivaṃśa* with the *Mahābhārata* itself is purely external and is limited essentially to the fact that the same Vaiśampāyana who is said to have recited the whole *Mahābhārata* to Janamejaya,³ is also regarded as the

¹ V, 33, 77, 80 f., 34, 41, III, 194, 7, V, 35, 11, XII, 146, 5, I, 74, 82, III, 206, 44, II, 72, 7, XII, 158, 58, V, 38, 72 (Roy's edition), translated by J. Muir, *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers*, pp. 93, 9, 88, 110, 85, 81 and 84.

² Cf. A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata* II, pp. 272-298, and E. W. Hopkins, *Gleanings from the Harivaṃśa* in 'Festschrift Windisch', pp. 68 ff. The *Harivaṃśa* has been translated into French by S. A. Langlois, Paris, 1834-35, and into English by Manmatha Nath Dutt, Calcutta, 1897.

³ See above, pp. 282 f.

reciter of the *Harivaṃśa*. In connection with the frame story of the *Mahābhārata*, Śaunaka, at the beginning of the appendix, requests Ugraśravas, after he has told him all the beautiful stories of the Bhāratas, to relate something about the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas—the families to which Kṛṣṇa belongs. Thereupon Ugraśravas remarks that exactly the same request had been made by Janamejaya to Vaiśampāyana after the recitation of the *Mahābhārata*, and the latter had then related all that which he himself was now going to repeat. Thus all that follows is placed in the mouth of Vaiśampāyana. Besides this, in a few verses at the beginning and a complete lengthy song at the end of the appendix,¹ the praise of the *Mahābhārata* including the *Harivaṃśa* is sung in extravagant verses, and the religious merit acquired by the reciting and hearing of the whole poem is emphasized. This exhausts practically everything whereby the *Harivaṃśa* itself shows its connection with the *Mahābhārata*. As far as the contents are concerned, the *Harivaṃśa* has no more in common with the *Mahābhārata* than the Purāṇas; for many legends, in particular brahmanical legends and myths, which occur in the *Mahābhārata*, reappear in different versions in the *Harivaṃśa* as well as in the Purāṇas.

The *Harivaṃśa* consists of three great sections, the first of which is entitled *Harivaṃśaparvan*. The title 'Harivaṃśa', i.e., 'genealogy of Hari',² which was given to the whole appendix is in reality only applicable to this first book. It begins in the manner of the Purāṇas with a rather confused account of the Creation and all sorts of mythological narratives, thus of Dhruva, who became the Pole Star (62 ff.), of Dakṣa and his daughters, the female ancestors of the gods and demons (101 ff.), and others. The story of Vena, the Titan who was opposed to the Veda and to sacrifice, and his son Prṛthu, the first king of men, is narrated in detail.³ Numerous legends, for instance those of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha (706 ff.) are worked into the genealogy of the solar

¹ Adhyāya 323, s. below.

² *Hari* is one of the most usual of the innumerable names of the god Viṣṇu.

³ *Prṛthupākhyāna*, Adhy. 4-6—vss. 257-405.

dynasty (545 ff.), *i.e.* of King Ikṣvaku and his descendants, who trace their origin back to the sun-god. Regardless of any connection with this genealogy there is then inserted a ritual portion about the fathers and the sacrificial service due to them.¹ Then follows (1312 ff.) the genealogy of the lunar dynasty, which sprang from Atri, the son of the moon-god (Soma). One of Soma's grandsons was the renowned *Purūravas*, whose love adventures with *Urvāṣī* are related in a very archaic form which rather closely approaches the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*.² Among the descendants of *Purūravas* are *Nahuṣa* and *Yayāti*. *Yadu*, the son of the latter, is the ancestor of the *Yādavas*, to whom *Vasudeva* belongs, as whose son *Kṛṣṇa* the god *Viṣṇu* is born on earth. After the genealogy of the human *Kṛṣṇa* has thus been given, there follow a series of songs (2131 ff.) dealing entirely with the god *Viṣṇu* and thus, to a certain extent, containing the divine previous history of *Kṛṣṇa*.

The second great section of the *Harivaṃśa*, entitled *Viṣṇuparvan*,³ deals almost exclusively with *Kṛṣṇa*, the god *Viṣṇu* become mortal. All the stories of the birth and childhood, the heroic deeds and love adventures of the human, often all-too-human, cowherd-god, are related here at great length ; they are also related in greater or less detail in some of the *Purāṇas*, and have made the name *Kṛṣṇa* one of the most familiar to every Hindu. While the best and wisest among the *Viṣṇu*-worshippers honour *Kṛṣṇa* above all as the herald of the pious doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is the *Kṛṣṇa* of the legends as they are related in the *Harivaṃśa* and in the *Purāṇas*, who is now honoured and worshipped as a lofty god, and now exalted as an ideal of the most perfect manhood, by the millions of Hindus of all classes throughout India till the present day. It is this god of the legends, and not the *Kṛṣṇa* of the *Mahābhārata*, the cunning friend of the

¹ *Pitrkalpa*, 'ancestral ritual', Adhy. 16-24, vss. 835-1311. The story of *Brahmadatta*, who understands the languages of the animals, is inserted in Adhy. 21, vss. 1185 ff. ; this is translated and discussed by Th. Benfey in *Orient und Occident*, Vol. II, 1862, pp. 133-171, and by Leumann, WZKM., 6, 1892, pp. 1 ff.

² Adhy. 26=vss. 1363-1414, translated by K. Geldner in *Vedische Studien* I, p. 249 ff. Cf. above pp. 182 f.

³ Adhy. 57 ff.=vss. 3180 ff.



Pāṇḍavas, of whom the Greek Megasthenes already talked as the 'Indian Hercules'. In order to give at least an idea of these Kṛṣṇa legends which are important alike in the history of literature and the history of religion, the contents of the second section of the *Harivaṃśa* shall here be briefly sketched.

In the town of Mathurā there reigned a bad king *Kaṃsa*. To him Nārada announced that he would meet his death at the hands of the eighth son of *Devakī*, the sister of his father and the wife of *Vasudeva*. Then *Kaṃsa* determines to kill all *Devakī*'s children. He has *Devakī* closely guarded by his servants, and six of her children are killed immediately after birth. The seventh child, that brother of Kṛṣṇa who is later known as '*Rāma* with the ploughshare', '*Balarāma*', or '*Baladeva*', is rescued by *Nidrā*,¹ the goddess of sleep, by her transferring the boy, before he is born, from the womb of *Devakī* to that of *Rohiṇī*, another wife of *Vasudeva*. The eighth son, however, and this was Kṛṣṇa, was exchanged by *Vasudeva* himself, immediately after birth, in order to rescue him from *Kaṃsa*, with the daughter of the cowherd *Nanda* and his wife *Yaśodā*, who was born at the same time. So the little daughter of the latter is dashed against a rock by *Kaṃsa*, while Kṛṣṇa is regarded as the son of a cowherd and grows up among the cowherds. *Rāma*, too, is entrusted to the protection of the cowherd family by *Vasudeva*, and the two boys grow up together in the cowherds' station. Even as a suckling Kṛṣṇa performs wondrous miracles. One day, when his foster-mother *Yaśodā*, after having laid the sleeping child under a waggon, lets him wait too long for food, he begins to struggle impatiently with hands and feet and finally overthrows the heavy waggon with one foot. In mad merriment the boys Kṛṣṇa and *Rāma* later rush through forest and field, and make much trouble for the simple cowherd's wife. On one occasion she hardly knows what to do, so she ties a rope round little Kṛṣṇa's body and fastens him tightly to a heavy mortar, saying angrily: "Now run, if thou canst." But the boy not only drags away the mortar with him, but as the mortar gets caught between two gigantic trees, he tears out the mighty trees by their roots. Horrified, the cowherds and the foster-mother see the boy sitting laughing between the branches of the trees, but he himself is uninjured.

After seven years had elapsed, the boys grew tired of the cowherds' station. So Kṛṣṇa caused innumerable wolves to issue from his body, which frightened the cowherds so much that they decided to wander further. They wandered with their flocks to the *Vṛndā*-forest. Here

¹ Perhaps the circumstance that *Nidrā* is also the name of *Durgā*, gave rise to the interpolation of a hymn to this goddess, the *Āryāstava* (Adhy. 59 = vss. 3268-3303). But the interpolation of such hymns (stotras) is characteristic of all Purāṇas.



the boys now run happily through the forest. But one day Kṛṣṇa strolls alone—now playing now singing, now whistling on a leaf, now blowing on the cowherd's flute—along the banks of the river Jumnā, and reaches the deep lake in which the snake-king *Kaliya* dwells, who, with his retinue, poisons the water of the Jumnā and makes the whole neighbourhood unsafe. With swift determination, Kṛṣṇa plunges into the lake, in order to overcome the frightful dragon. Soon the five-headed, fire-breathing monster appears, and a host of snakes rush furiously upon the youthful hero, surrounding and biting him. But he soon frees himself, presses the heads of the monster on the ground, and jumps with force on to the middle head, so that the dragon confesses himself conquered and retreats into the deep with the whole brood of snakes.

Soon afterwards he also slays the demon *Dhenuka*, who, in the form of an ass, guards the mountain Govardhana. Another demon, the giant *Pralamba*, does not venture to tackle Kṛṣṇa, but is slain by Rama, the brother of the latter.

In the autumn the cowherds, according to their custom, wish to arrange a great feast in honour of the rain god *Indra*. Kṛṣṇa will have none of this worship of Indra. "We are cowherds who wander through the forests, who always live by the wealth of cows, the cows are our deity, the hills and forests" (3808). In such words he invites the cowherds to arrange a mountain-sacrifice instead of the Indra celebration, which the cowherds do. At this Indra is so enraged that he sends down a frightful storm. But Kṛṣṇa lifts up the mountain Govardhana and holds it like an umbrella over the cowherds and their flocks, so that they are entirely sheltered. After seven days the storm ceases, Kṛṣṇa restores the mountain to its place, and Indra humbly recognises in Kṛṣṇa the exalted god Viṣṇu.

Then the cowherds praise and worship him as a god, but he smilingly declares that he only desires to be their relative ; the time will come later when they will recognise his true nature. And, as a cowherd among cowherds, he lives in youthful happiness. He organises bull-fights and tournaments with the strongest among the cowherds. On the lovely autumn nights, however, his heart rejoiced in the round dances,¹ which the beautiful cowherdresses, who are all enamoured of the hero-youth, perform in the moonlight, singing of his deeds and jestingly imitating his play, his merry glance, his gait, his dancing and his singing.

Once, when Kṛṣṇa was enjoying himself with the cowherdresses, *Ariṣṭa*, a demon in the form of a bullock, appeared. Kṛṣṇa tears out one of his horns and slays him with it.

¹ These are the dances called *Rāsa* or *Hallīśa*, accompanied by pantomimic representations, and which still to-day take place in some parts of India, and, for instance, in Kathiawad are still known by a name corresponding to the Sanskrit 'Hallīśa'. (Cf. the Indian monthly magazine *East and West*, Vol. I, 748 f., May, 1902).



The fame of all the heroic deeds of Kṛṣṇa reaches the ears of Kāṁsa and causes him anxiety. In order to get him out of the way, he sends for the two youthful heroes to come to Mathurā, where, at a festival, they are to fight with his best wrestlers. But no sooner has he arrived in the town than Kṛṣṇa performs wonderful miracles and feats of strength. Thus he bends the king's great bow, which even the gods cannot bend, with such strength that, with a tremendous crash, it breaks in twain. Kṛṣṇa pulls out the tusk of an elephant which Kāṁsa lets loose upon the youths, and kills the elephant with it. The two powerful champion wrestlers with whom Kāṁsa confronts the youths are also killed by them. Filled with rage, the king now commands that the cowherd-youths and all cowherds shall be driven out of his kingdom. Then Kṛṣṇa springs like a lion upon Kāṁsa, drags him by his hair into the centre of the arena and kills him.

After some time the two brothers go to Ujjein, in order to learn the art of archery from a famous teacher there. A son of this teacher has perished in the sea, and as his fee, he demands that Kṛṣṇa shall bring him back this son. Then Kṛṣṇa descends into the underworld, overcomes the god of death, Yama, and brings the boy back to his father.

In order to avenge the death of Kāṁsa, his father-in-law *Jarāsandha* goes forth with many allied princes to fight against the Yādavas, besieges Mathurā, is repeatedly repulsed by Kṛṣṇa, but always renews his attacks, until at last he is compelled to retreat. These battles with Jarāsandha are described in a long series of narratives.

In the same way the following narrative of the rape of *Rukmiṇī* is spun out.¹ King Bhīṣmaka of Vidarbha has promised his daughter Rukmiṇī in marriage to king Śiśupāla, and the wedding was about to be celebrated. Then Kṛṣṇa comes with his brother Rāma to the marriage-feast and *kidnaps* the bride. The deeply-offended princes pursue him, but are repulsed by Rāma. Rukmin, the brother of the kidnapped girl, swears he will never return to his native town, unless he has killed Kṛṣṇa and brought his sister back. A fierce fight takes place, in which Rukmin is defeated; but in response to the entreaties of Rukmiṇī Kṛṣṇa grants him his life. In order not to break his oath, Rukmin founds a new town for himself. In Dvārakā the marriage of Kṛṣṇa with Rukmiṇī takes place. With her he begets ten sons, but later marries seven queens and sixteen thousand other wives, with whom he begets thousands of sons. *Pradyumna*, a son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī,² later marries a daughter of Rukmin, and their son Aniruddha marries a grand-daughter of Rukmin. At the marriage of Aniruddha, Rāma and Rukmin quarrel over a game of dice,

¹ Into the old legend, in which Kṛṣṇa appears as *hero* later portions are here interpolated, in which he appears as god Viṣṇu in his full divinity.

² He is an incarnation of the god of love.

and the latter is slain by Rāma. In connection with this there is a glorification of the deeds of Rāma.¹

Then follows the story of the slaying of *Naraka*.² This Naraka is a demon, who has stolen the ear-rings of Aditi, and also otherwise gives the gods much trouble. At the request of Indra Kṛṣṇa fights against him and kills him.

The next narrative³ shows us Kṛṣṇa in a battle against Indra. The seer Nārada once brought Kṛṣṇa a blossom from the heavenly tree *Pārijāta*, which Kṛṣṇa gave to his beloved Rukmiṇī. Then Satyabhāmā, one of his other wives, grows terribly jealous, and sulks until Kṛṣṇa promises to bring her the whole *Pārijāta*-tree from heaven. But as Indra will not willingly surrender the tree, Kṛṣṇa challenges him to fight. This leads to a long and violent battle between the two gods, which, however, is finally settled peaceably by Aditi, the mother of gods.

There follows a rather extensive didactic portion,⁴ only very slightly connected with this long section, and really belonging to scientific eroticism, the *Kāmasāstra*. This is an instruction (in the form of a conversation between the wives of Kṛṣṇa and the wise Nārada, who, however, refers to *Umā*, the wife of Śiva, as his authority) upon *Puṇyakas* and *Vratas*, i.e., ceremonies, festivals and vows, by means of which a wife can make her body pleasing to her husband and assure herself of his favour. But as these ceremonies are efficacious only for virtuous wives, a few instructions upon the duties of wives (7754 ff.) are given at the beginning.

The next section⁵ again relates Kṛṣṇa's battles with the demons. The Asuras of the 'six towns' (*Ṣaṭpura*) steal the daughters of the pious Brahmadatta. Kṛṣṇa comes to his rescue and kills Nikumbha, the king of the Asuras, and restores the Brahman his daughters.

Then follows an entirely Śivaite passage,⁶ which has nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa, and relates how the thousand-headed demon *Andhaka* is killed by Śiva.

The following section⁷ reverts to Kṛṣṇa and relates another story of the killing of the Asura Nikumbha. The Yādavas, with Kṛṣṇa and Rāma at their head, undertake a pilgrimage to the sea to a sacred bathing-place in order to celebrate a great joyous festival there. Kṛṣṇa with his sixteen thousand wives, Rāma with his only wife Revatī, and youths of the Yādavas with thousands of courtesans give themselves up to playing and

¹ *Baladevamāhātmyakathana*, Adhy. 120 = vss. 6766-6786.

² *Narakavadha*, Adhyāyas 121-123 = vss. 6787-6988.

³ *Pārijāta-haraṇa*, Adhy. 124-140 = vss. 6989-7956. A hymn to Śiva is inserted (*Mahādevastavana*), Adhy. 131 = vss. 7415-7455.

⁴ *Puṇyakavidhi*, Adhy. 136-140 = vss. 7722-7956.

⁵ *Ṣaṭpuravadha*, Adhy. 141-144 = vss. 7957-8198.

⁶ *Andhakavadha*, Adhy. 145 f. = vss. 8199-8300.

⁷ *Bhānumatī-haraṇa*, Adhy. 147-149 = vss. 8301-8549.



singing, feasting and drinking, and all kinds of enjoyments in the water and on the sea-shore.¹ During these festivities the demon Nikumbha kidnaps *Bhānumatī*, a daughter of the Yādava Bhānu. Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna pursues the Asura and brings the stolen one back, while Kṛṣṇa himself kills Naraka.

The following cantos² deal almost exclusively with *Pradyumna*, the son of Kṛṣṇa. First the story of the marriage of Pradyumna with *Prabhāvatī*, the daughter of the Asura *Vajranābha*, is related, in which the heavenly flamingoes intervene in bringing about the bond of love just as in the Nala-song flamingoes are the messengers of love between Nala and Damayantī. In order to win *Prabhāvatī*, Pradyumna, disguised as an actor, comes with a whole troupe of actors to the court of *Vajranābha*. Then all sorts of plays are performed³ with which the Asuras are greatly charmed. But Pradyumna uses the lovely nights for secretly enjoying the pleasures of love with *Prabhāvatī*. Finally, *Vajranābha* hears of the love-intrigue, and, full of anger, he is about to have Pradyumna thrown into fetters. But the latter kills the warriors who rush towards him, and the Asura king himself. Thereupon he enters *Dvārakā* with his beloved one.

The second narrative⁴ treats of the youthful love of *Pradyumna*: how he is kidnapped by Asuras seven days after his birth and grows up in the house of the demon *Śambara*; how *Māyāvatī*, the wife of the latter, burns with love for the beautiful youth and enlightens him on the fact that he is not her son, but the son of Kṛṣṇa and *Rukmīṇī*; how Pradyumna then kills *Śambara* after a desperate fight⁵ and finally, united with *Māyāvatī*, returns to his native town, where he is joyfully received by his parents.

For no reason at all, the daily prayer of Rāma,⁶ a litany consisting of an enumeration of divine beings, is inserted here.

¹ The brilliant description of these voluptuous scenes fills two cantos (147 f.= 8301-8470).

² Adhy. 150 ff.=vss. 8550 ff. Freely rendered into German in the beautiful poem 'Pradyumna' by Schack, *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 67 ff.

³ This (8672 ff.) is perhaps one of the oldest, certainly one of the most interesting mentions of dramas and dramatic performances in Indian literature. Not only scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa are here produced, but dramatizations of the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa* and of the story of *R̥ṣyaśṛṅga* (cf. above pp. 351 f.) are also expressly mentioned. Unfortunately the age of this piece called 'Pradyumnottara', is quite uncertain. Cf. Sylvain Lévi, *Le théâtre indien*, Paris, 1890, pp. 327 ff., and A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*, Oxford 1924, pp. 28, 47 f.

⁴ *Śambaravadha*, Adhy. 163-167 = vss. 9208-9487.

⁵ In this he is helped by *Durgā*, whom he invokes in a hymn (*Pradyumna-kṛta Durgāstava*, Adhy. 166 = 9423-9430).

⁶ *Baladevāhnikā*, Adhy. 168 = vss. 9488-9591.

After a few shorter pieces, legends and speeches in praise of Kṛṣṇa, the book concludes with the story of the "battle of Bāṇa"¹ and the love affair of *Aniruddha*, the son of Pradyumna, with *Īṣā*, the daughter of the Asura-king Bāṇa. The latter is a favourite of the god Śiva. Kṛṣṇa comes to the aid of Aniruddha, who is hard pressed by Bāṇa ; and the fighting with Bāṇa leads to a violent battle between Śiva and Viṣṇu, by which the whole world is seriously menaced. But Brahman comes to the aid of the earth and creates peace between the two gods, by declaring that Śiva and Viṣṇu are one. Here follows a hymn (stotra) glorifying these two as identical deities.² With the marriage of Aniruddha and Īṣā, which is celebrated with great magnificence in Dvāravatī, the book ends.

The intermingling of stotras (hymns) as that of Viṣṇu-Śiva here, shows particularly to how great an extent the *Harivaṃśa* is a collection of texts for *religious* purposes, and not an epic poem.³

But while in *Book II* there are still some remains of a *Kṛṣṇa epic* which must certainly once have existed, *Book III*, called *Bhaviṣyaparvan* (11063 ff.), is only a loose collection of Purāṇa texts. The title *Bhaviṣyaparvan*, i.e., 'section of the future' refers only to the first cantos of this book, which contain prophecies regarding the coming ages of the world. Here is related the story of a horse-sacrifice which Janamejaya wished to offer ; but Vyāsa foretells him that this sacrifice would not be successful, for the godless age of Kali will dawn, which will be followed only a long time later by the Kṛta-age of virtue and piety. This section⁴ forms a complete whole and is even termed an independent poem. Then follow, without any connection, two different accounts of the Creation.⁵ A third section deals in great detail with the

¹ *Bāṇayuddha*, Adhy. 175-190=9806-11062.

² *Harīharātmakastava*, Adhy. 184 = vss. 10660-10697. This is one of the few places in Indian literature where there is a mention of *Trimūrti*. For *Hari* (Viṣṇu) and *Hara* (Śiva) are not only identical with each other, but also with *Brahman*.

³ How largely the *Harivaṃśa* is regarded as a religious book, is proved by the circumstance that it is the custom in the courts of justice in Nepal to place a copy of the *Harivaṃśa* on the head of the witness, if he is a Hindu, in the same way as the Koran is placed upon the head of a Mohammedan (A. Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 156 note).

⁴ Adhy. 191-196 = vss. 11063-11278. The passage is commended, in 11270 ff., as a great ornate poem (*mahākāvya*). But verses 11082 ff. already say clearly that the *Harivaṃśa* is concluded, and that the story of Janamejaya's horse-sacrifice only forms an appendix to the *Harivaṃśa*. The subsequent sections are most probably only later additions.

⁵ *Paṇḍikaprādurbhāva*, Adhy. 197-222 = vss. 11279-12277.



incarnations of Viṣṇu as a boar, a man-lion and dwarf.¹ Next follows a section which, like the last one in *Book II*, pursues the tendency to harmonise Viṣṇu- and Śiva-worship. Alternately Viṣṇu sings a hymn to Śiva and Śiva to Viṣṇu.² The next passage again deals with a heroic deed of Kṛṣṇa, namely the slaying of King *Paṇḍra*, who rises up against Kṛṣṇa.³ The last longer section of the *Harivaṃśa* is the legend (upākhyāna) of the two Śiva-worshippers *Hamsa* and *Dimbhaka*, who are humiliated by Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu.⁴

There is appended yet another long canto which, in most extravagant fashion, tells of the merit of reading the *Mahābhārata* and the reward of heaven which awaits the reader, and further prescribes the presents which one should give to the readers (*vācaka*) after the close of every parvan, and finally ends with a song in praise of the *Mahābhārata* as the most sacred and most exalted of all 'text-books' (*śāstra*).⁵ Above all, however, it is boasted that the work serves for the glorification of Viṣṇu, for : "In the Veda, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in the sacred *Bhārata*, O bravest of Bharata's descendants, everywhere, at the beginning, at the end, and in the middle *Hari* is glorified."⁶

Strange to say, after all the glorifications of Viṣṇu, and after the actual conclusion of the book, there still follows a canto⁷ in which the god Śiva comes into his own, and it is related how he destroyed the three castles (*Tripura*) of the demons. Yet even here a final verse in praise of the 'great yogin' Viṣṇu is added.

The book finally concludes with a short summing-up of the contents of the *Harivaṃśa* and an enumeration of the religious gains one acquires by hearing this 'Purāṇa'.

¹ Adhy. 223-263 = vss. 12278-14390. Brahman begins a hymn to Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu-stotra) 12880 ff. (Adhy. 238). Kaśyapa utters a hymn in prose to the 'Great Spirit' (Mahāpuruṣastava) 14114 ff. (Adhy. 259).

² *Kailāsaśāstrā*, Adhy. 264-281 = vss. 14391-15031. Adhy. 278; *Īśvarastuti*, Adhy. 279 and 281. Viṣṇustotra.

³ *Paṇḍrakavadha*, Adhy. 282-293 = vss. 15032-15375.

⁴ *Haṇuadimbhakopākhyāna*, Adhy. 294-322 = vss. 15376-16139.

⁵ Adhy. 323 = vss. 16140-16238 : *Sarvaparvānukīrtana*. The enumeration of the parvans partly contains other names than our editions. The contents of this adhyāya coincide with similar songs of praise in Book I of the *Mahābhārata*. Cf. above, pp. 285 f.

⁶ Verse 16232.

⁷ *Tripuravadha*, Adhy. 324 = 16239-16324.

The fact that the *Harivaṃśa* is absolutely and entirely a *Purāṇa* is also shown by the numerous, often literally identical, coincidences with passages in several of the most important *Purāṇas*.¹ Nevertheless, it was necessary to speak of the *Harivaṃśa* here, and not only later in the chapter on the *Purāṇas*, not only because this work is regarded by the *Indians* as belonging to the *Mahābhārata*, but also because this supplement and the way in which it is added to the epic is peculiarly adapted for throwing light on the history of the *Mahābhārata* itself. We will now turn to this history.

THE AGE AND HISTORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

We have now given a survey of all that has come down to us as *Mahābhārata* in manuscripts and editions, and are now faced with the question: How and when did this gigantic work originate?

Already in the short account of the contents of the actual heroic poem (pp. 288-330) the reader must have noticed a contradiction, which is still more noticeable in the reading of the *Mahābhārata* itself. While the poem in its present form absolutely takes the part of the *Pāṇḍavas*, and describes the *Pāṇḍavas* as not only brave beyond measure, but also as noble and good, and on the other hand, represents the *Kauravas* as treacherous and mischievous,—the poem, in remarkable self-contradiction, relates that all the heroes of the *Kauravas* fall through treachery or in unfair fight.² It is still more striking that all the treachery emanates from *Kṛṣṇa*, that *he* is always the instigator of all the deceit and defends the conduct of the *Pāṇḍavas*. And this is the same *Kṛṣṇa* who in many parts of the *Mahābhārata* and more especially in the *Harivaṃśa*, is praised and glorified as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*, the highest god, and as the ideal and prototype of every virtue.

¹ *Brahma-*, *Padma-*, *Viṣṇu-*, *Bhāgavata-*, and especially *Vāyu-Purāṇa*. The *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* communicates the contents of the *Mahābhārata* and of the *Harivaṃśa* in extract. See A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, IV, pp. 32, 35, 37 ff., 40, 42 ff., 47 ff., 56.

² See above, pp. 317 f.



How can these remarkable contradictions be explained? Upon this there can only be conjectures. First, there is probably justification for the supposition, although we have only the authority of the *Mahābhārata* itself for it, that a change of dynasty did actually once take place in the North-west of India as the result of a great war, and that these quasi-historical events form the foundation of the epic itself.¹ Starting out from this, we can well imagine that the original heroic songs dealing with the fight between the hostile cousins, were sung among the bards who were still near Duryodhana himself or the house of the Kauravas, but that, in the course of time, as the rule of the victorious Pāṇḍavas was more and more firmly established, these songs were transmitted to bards who were in the employ of the new ruling race. In the mouths of these bards those alterations were then undertaken which made the Pāṇḍavas appear in a favourable light and the Kauravas in an unfavourable one, without its being possible to eradicate completely the original tendency of the songs. In our *Mahābhārata* the nucleus of the epic, the description of the great battle, is placed in the mouth of Sañjaya, the charioteer of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, that is, in the mouth of the bard of the Kauravas. It is precisely in these battle-scenes that the Kauravas appear in the most favourable light. The whole *Mahābhārata*, on the other hand, is recited, according to the frame-story contained in *Book I*, by Vyāsa's pupil, Vaiśampāyana at the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya. This Janamejaya, however, is regarded as a descendant of the Pāṇḍava Arjuna, which agrees well with the fact that, in the *Mahābhārata* as a whole, the Pāṇḍavas are preferred to the Kauravas.²

¹ Even those who find a *mythological* nucleus in the legend underlying the epic, admit that there are also historical elements in it. Thus A. Ludwig *Über das Verhältnis des mythischen Elementes zu der historischen Grundlage des Mahābhārata*. ('Abhandlungen der k. böhmischen Ges. d. Wissensch'. VI, 12), Prague, 1884. Pargiter and Grierson (JRAS., 1908, pp. 309 ff., 602 ff.) have expressed the opinion that, underlying the war between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas there may be the historical fact of a battle of nations (a fight between the nations of Madhyadeśa and the other nations of India) and at the same time a fight between a warrior party on the one side and a priestly party on the other. I do not consider that there is any justification of this historical construction. Cf. Hopkins, *Cambridge History I*, p. 275.

² I do not think that there was a systematic remodelling (as is the view of Holtzmann), but that gradual changes were made. J. v. Negelein (OLZ., 1908, 336 f.) refutes this theory by observing that the ancient epic took no stock whatsoever of the

As regards Kṛṣṇa, the race of the Yādavas to which he belongs, is described in several places in the *Mahābhārata* as a cowherd-tribe of rough manners, and he himself is repeatedly scorned by hostile heroes as 'cowherd' and 'slave'. In the ancient heroic poem, he was certainly nothing more than a prominent leader of that cowherd-tribe and had nothing divine about him. Even behind the Kṛṣṇa-legends of the *Harivaṃśa* there seems to be a foundation of older legends, in which Kṛṣṇa was not yet a god, but the hero of a rough tribe of cowherds. It is difficult to believe that Kṛṣṇa, the friend and counsellor of the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛṣṇa, the herald of the doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa, the youthful hero and demon-slayer, Kṛṣṇa, the favourite and lover of the cowherdresses, and finally Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of the exalted god Viṣṇu, can be one and the same person. It is far more likely that there were two or several traditional Kṛṣṇas, who were merged into *one* deity at a later time. Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, is mentioned in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (III, 17) as a pupil of Ghora Āṅgīrasa, who expounds doctrines which at least in a few points coincide with those of the *Bhagavadgītā*. For this reason we can scarcely separate this old sage of the time of the Upaniṣads from the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavadgītā*.¹ It is possible that this Kṛṣṇa was the founder of the Bhāgavata religion, and that like so many other founders of religions in India, he was made into an incarnation of the god worshipped by his adherents.² It is possible, moreover, that Kṛṣṇa did not figure at all in the original epic, and was introduced only

moral point of view, that it portrayed both parties in almost equal light and shade, and that it merely rejoiced in the actual display of strength. A similar view is taken by Oldenberg (*Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 35 ff.) who, like Hopkins (*Cambridge History* I, 265) believes that the moral reflections cast on the conduct of the Pāṇḍavas belong to a more modern age, "when a finer morality had begun to temper the crude royal and military spirit." Hertel (*WZKM.*, 24, 1910, 421) seeks to explain the contradiction of the treacherous behaviour of the Pāṇḍavas and the poet's siding with them, by saying that the *Mahābhārata* has the character of a *nītiśāstra* and that, according to the rules of politics, the king is justified in or even in duty bound to the utilisation of cunning. These scholars, however, forget that the speeches in which the Pāṇḍavas' manner of fighting is condemned as dishonourable, do not belong to the didactic additions to the epic, but are interwoven with the description of the fight itself, and do not in the least bear the stamp of later additions.

¹ Cf. H. Raychaudhuri, *Early History of the Vaishnava Sect.*, pp. 23, 30 f., 48 ff.

² This view is advocated especially by Garbe, *Die Bhagavadgītā*, 2nd Ed., pp. 27 ff.



later, perhaps with the express intention of justifying the actions of the Pāṇḍavas, which were shady from the moral point of view, by representing them as inspired by the 'god' Kṛṣṇa.¹ Much as has been written on the problem of Kṛṣṇa, we must admit, nevertheless, that no satisfactory solution has been found.² In any case, it is a far cry from Kṛṣṇa the friend of the Pāṇḍavas, to the Kṛṣṇa of the *Harivaṃśa* and the exalted god Viṣṇu.

The political and religious development which is reflected in those songs of the *Mahābhārata* which refer to the great fight—the passing of the supremacy from the Kauravas to the Pāṇḍavas, and the deification of Kṛṣṇa—thus already presupposes a long period of time, and it is unthinkable that even these songs only, which form the nucleus of the work, should originate with one single poet. Such an assumption becomes still more impossible if we consider the countless *contradictions* which occur in the *details* of the principal narrative. I will recall only the narratives of the marriage of the Pāṇḍavas (see above, pp. 294 f.) and the adventures of Arjuna (p. 297). In *Book IV* we find a duplicate of the whole battle in the Kuru-field: Bhīṣma and all the other heroes of the Kauravas are put to flight by Arjuna almost in no time; which does not fit in well with the fact that later on it is only possible to overcome the Kauravas in eighteen days, and then only by the employment of guile on the part of the Pāṇḍavas. There can scarcely be any doubt that the whole of *Book IV* (*Virāṭaparvan*) is a later production³ than

¹ Thus Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 37, 43. Cf. also Jacobi, ERE., VII, 195 f. and Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (London, 1921), II, 154, who emphasizes the point that Kṛṣṇa is not so essentially important in the story of the *Mahābhārata* as is Rāma in that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It seems to me, however, that the warrior Kṛṣṇa, not the god Kṛṣṇa, is too closely bound up with the main narrative for the epic to be imaginable entirely without him.

² Cf. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata* I, 132 ff.; A. Weber, *Zur indischen Religionsgeschichte* ('Sonderabdruck' aus 'Deutsche Revue', 1899), pp. 28 f.; L. J. Sedgwick, JBRAS., 23, 1910, pp. 115 ff.; Grierson, ERE., II, 539 ff. Jacobi, ERE., VII, 193 ff. and *Streitberg-Festgabe*, p. 168; A. B. Keith, JRAS., 1915, 548 ff.; R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., pp. 3 f., 8 ff., 33 ff., Raychaudhuri, *loc. cit.*, pp. 18 ff. and *passim*; Garbe, *loc. cit.*; Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* II, 152 ff.; Hopkins in *Cambridge History* I, 258; Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 37 ff.

³ Thus already Holtzmann, *Mahābhārata* II, p. 98, and Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 382 f. Cf. N. B. Utgikar, *The Virāṭaparvan of the Mahābhārata* (Poona, 1923), pp. xx f. and my remarks in *Ann. Bh. Inst.* V, 1, p. 23.

the magnificent battle-descriptions in the following books. But even in those books which unquestionably contain the oldest parts of the epic, there are constantly to be found contradictions which cannot possibly be explained by the 'ingenious carelessness' of any *one* poet.¹ Beside the most splendid descriptions full of raciness and vigour, there are also to be found long songs, in which the description of the eighteen-day battle is spun out as long as possible with dull monotony and continual repetitions.

Thus even what we can term the 'actual epic', as it has come down to us, is certainly not the work of *one* poet. Even this 'nucleus' of the *Mahābhārata* is no longer the old heroic poem ; but the latter is *contained* in it, in a much diluted condition.

We have now seen that around this nucleus an enormous mass of the most miscellaneous poems has accumulated ; heroic songs from various cycles of legends, brahmanical myths and legend poetry, ascetic poetry and didactic poems of all kinds from the simplest moral maxims to extensive philosophical poems, formal law-books and complete Purāṇas. Though J. Dahlmann has applied an enormous amount of erudition in an attempt to prove that the *Mahābhārata* is one unified work which was composed by *one* poet in pre-Buddhist times both as an epic and a law-book,² only few scholars agree with him. Sylvain Lévi,³ too, has recently attempted to explain the *Mahābhārata* as "a deliberate composition organically and artistically spread around a central fact and inspired by a dominant sentiment

¹ Cf. above, notes on pp. 317, 318 f. ; 321, 325 f.

² In his book *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch* (Berlin, 1895) (s. above, p. 276 note 1). Dahlmann, it is true, only speaks of a 'unified diaskeuasis' but yet he ascribes to the 'diaskeuast' an activity which could certainly stamp him as a poet ; and in conclusion (p. 302) he speaks of the *Mahābhārata* as the work of 'one single poetical creative genius'. In his book *Genesis des Mahābhārata* (Berlin, 1899) he says directly : "The poet was a *diaskeuast*, the *diaskeuast* a poet." It is noteworthy that even such a rather orthodox Indian as C. V. Vaidya (*The Mahābhārata : A Criticism*, Bombay, 1905), who speaks with reverence of Vyāsa, the contemporary of Kṛṣṇa, as the 'poet' of the *Mahābhārata* (whom he places high above Homer, Milton and Shakespeare) and in all earnestness computes that Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa might have lived at the time of the *Mahābhārata* war about 3101 B.C., yet frankly admits that the *Mahābhārata* in its present form is the extension of an originally much smaller work and contains numerous additions and interpolations.

³ *Bhandarkar Com. Vol.*, pp. 99 ff. (English in *Ann. Bh. Inst.* I, 1, 13 ff.).



which penetrates and permeates it." He compares the *Mahābhārata* with the *Vinaya*, the code of discipline of the Mūla-Sarvāstivādin Buddhists, and is of opinion that the whole great epic "with all its exaggerations and episodes, with all its varied and luxuriant mass of detail" is based on nothing but "a code of Kṣatriya discipline as practised by the Bhāgavatas". Of course, if we take it that the nucleus of the epic is to be found in the *Bhagavadgītā*, Nārāyaṇīya and *Harivaṃśa*, such a point of view is justifiable. If, however, as I myself believe, the real nucleus of the *Mahābhārata* is a heroic poem of the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, Lévi's interpretation is just as impossible as that of Dahlmann. Those scholars who see in the *Mahābhārata* a 'scripture of the warrior caste'¹ forget that the *Mahābhārata* as we have it in our present-day text contains much which would be quite out of place in a work intended for warriors. The ascetic morality of ahimsā which is preached in so many passages in the didactic sections, of the love towards all creatures and complete resignation, is just as incompatible with the very sensual pleasures promised to the warrior in Indra's heaven, as with the eating of meat and the drinking of strong drinks in which the heroes and even their wives indulge, in many a vivid description of the warriors' life in the actual epic.² Anyone who has really read the whole of the *Mahābhārata* and not only the most magnificent portions of it, is bound to admit that our present-day text of the epic contains not only much that is diverse in content, but also much that is diverse in value. In truth, he who would believe with the orthodox Hindus and the above-mentioned Western scholars, that our *Mahābhārata*, in its present form, is the work of one single man, would be forced to the conclusion that this man was, *at one and the same time*, a great poet and a wretched scribbler, a sage and an idiot, a talented artist and a ridiculous pedant—apart from the fact that this marvellous person must have known

¹ Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* I, pp. xc f. Of. also Hopkins in *Cambridge History* I, p. 256.

² See Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 373, 376 ff.

and confessed the most antagonistic religious views, and the most contradictory philosophical doctrines.¹

With regard to *language, style and metre*, too, the various parts of the *Mahābhārata* show absolutely no uniformity. It is in only quite a general sense that one can speak of 'epic Sanskrit' as the language of the popular epics.² In reality the language of the epic is in some parts *more archaic*, i.e., more closely related to the Ancient Indian of the Vedic prose works, than in other parts. And beside linguistic phenomena which recall the Pāli, and which can be called *popular*, there are others which one is compelled to call *solecisms*, such as are often committed by uneducated and inferior authors like the Purāṇa composers. The style, too, can only in a general sense be said to be far removed from the so-called 'Kāvya style' i.e., the style of the later ornate poetry, which is characterised by the *excessive* use of embellishments (Alaṃkāras). However, there is no lack of passages in the *Mahābhārata* which remind us of this Kāvya style.³ Beside these, we also find portions which retain the naïve style of the old Itihāsas, as they are related in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, while again in numerous other portions the most negligent Purāṇa style prevails. As regards the metre,⁴ the *Śloka* which originated in the old Anuṣṭubh is certainly the metre *par excellence*. But there are earlier and later forms of this *Śloka*, which are all represented in the *Mahābhārata*. Moreover, our epic also contains old prose passages, in which the prose is occasionally rhythmical, and sometimes alternates with verses.⁵ Also of the Triṣṭubh metre which is often used

¹ Oldenberg (*Das Mahābhārata*, p. 32) calls it a 'scientific monstrosity' to suppose that the *Mahābhārata* was a unified composition.

² The epic language is treated by H. Jacobi, *Das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 112 ff. Cf. also above, p. 38, and Hopkins, *The Great Epic*, p. 262. A. Ludwig, *Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, pp. 5 ff; J. Wackernagel, *Altindische Grammatik* I, pp. xlv ff.; W. Kirfel, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Nominalkomposition in den Upaniṣads und im Epos*, Bonn 1908; Keith, *JRAS.*, 1906, pp. 2 f; Oldenberg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 129 ff., 145 ff.

³ Cf. above, p. 320. But these passages are not numerous, at all events not nearly as numerous as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

⁴ See Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 191 ff.; J. Zubaty, *ZDMG.*, 43, 1889, pp. 619 ff.; Ludwig, *loc. cit.*, p. 37; Jacobi in *Gurupūjakaumadī*, pp. 50 ff.; Oldenberg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 137 ff.

⁵ Cf. Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 266 ff. The view taken by Oldenberg (*Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 21 ff. and elsewhere) that these prose-poetry passages are the oldest portions of the *Mahābhārata*, is quite wrong in my opinion.



in the *Mahābhārata*, though the Śloka is about twenty times as frequent as the Triṣṭubh, we find the ancient form, still similar to the Vedic form, as well as later forms ; and even the elaborate metres of classical Sanskrit poetry are already to be found in certain parts of the *Mahābhārata*.

Lastly, we must not forget that the opening sections of the *Mahābhārata* themselves give clear indications that the epic had not always its present form and extent. Even the tables of contents which we find in the first two adhyāyas, are not always in agreement with our text.¹

Thus everything indicates that the *Mahābhārata* is not the work of one single author or of one time, but consists of earlier and later portions which belong to different centuries. Contents and form alike confirm the fact that some parts of the *Mahābhārata* reach back to the times of the Veda, while others must be synchronous with the late productions of the Purāṇa literature.

Now it has been assumed, especially by A. Holtzmann, that an ancient heroic poem of the Kauravas existed, which was the 'original *Mahābhārata*,' that this later underwent a 'revision with a tendency' in favour of the Pāṇḍavas ; and that it was then on several consecutive occasions – first by Buddhists, then by Brahmans—'revised with a tendency'. The 'second Purāṇa-like revision' must have taken place, according to Holtzmann, about 900-1100 A.D., "after which followed, a few centuries later, the definite establishment and completion of the text".²

It is important to state at once that this last supposition, according to which the *Mahābhārata* received its present form only in the 15th or 16th century, is absolutely false. For it is *proved* by literary and inscriptional evidence,³ that already

¹ See above, p. 237 ; V. V. Iyer, *Notes of a Study of the Preliminary Chapters of the Mahābhārata*, pp. 17 ff. and passim ; Oldenberg, *loc. cit.*, pp. 33 ff. Though the division into 18 parvans is traditional, it is not certain that the division was originally the same as we find it in our text at the present day. Alberūnī mentions other titles of the 18 parvans, s. E. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, I, pp. 132 f. The Southern Indian MSS. and the Javanese translation also have other titles. Cf. also Brockhaus, ZDMG., 6, 1862, pp. 528 ff.

² Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, I, 194.

³ See R. G. Bhandarkar, JBRAS., 10, 1871-2, pp. 81 ff. ; K. T. Telang, SDE., Vol. 8, pp. 28 ff. ; and especially G. Bühler and J. Kirste, *Indian Studies II*, SWA., 1892.

about 500 A.D. the *Mahābhārata* was no longer an actual epic, but a sacred text-book and religious discourse, and was, on the whole, not essentially different, in extent and contents, from the work as we have it at present. The philosopher *Kumārila* (about 700 A.D.) quotes numerous passages from almost all the books of the *Mahābhārata*, which to him was a great *smṛti* expounded by *Vyāsa*.¹ The poets *Subandhu* and *Bāṇa* (about 600-650 A.D.) knew the *Mahābhārata* chiefly as a poem, indeed *Bāṇa* considered it as the culmination of all poetry.² In his romance 'Kādambari', however, the latter also relates that the Queen *Vilāsavati* was present at a recitation of the *Mahābhārata* on the occasion of a festival in a temple at Ujjein. Such public readings of the *Mahābhārata* still at the present day take place in India in temples on festive occasions—and naturally not only for entertainment, but also for edification and religious instruction.³ As early as about 600 A.D. an inscription from Cambodia testifies to similar public readings of the *Mahābhārata*, and this by utilising *manuscripts*, presented expressly for this purpose in this distant Indian colony in Further India. Finally, we also possess deeds of land grants from the 5th and 6th centuries, in which the sections of *Book XIII* (see above, p. 373), dealing with the morality of giving (*dānadharma*) are quoted as sacred texts; and in *one* inscription of this kind the *Mahābhārata* is already called the 'collection of a hundred thousand verses'. The number of a hundred thousand verses, however, is not even approached, unless *Books XII* and *XIII* and even part of the *Harivaṃśa* are included.⁴ But if the *Mahābhārata* already in the 5th cen-

¹ See *Bühler, loc. cit.*, pp. 5 ff.

² *Harṣacarita*, introductory verses 4-10. But from this passage it does not follow, as *Peterson (Kādambari, Introd., p. 68)* thinks, that in *Bāṇa's* time the *Mahābhārata* 'was as yet comparatively a fresh wonder in the world', but rather that its fame had already 'penetrated the three worlds', as *Bāṇa* himself says. On the *Mahābhārata* in the works of *Subandhu* and *Bāṇa* s. W. Cartellieri. WZKM., 13, 1899, 57 ff.

³ In another place in the *Kādambari* (ed. *Peterson, p. 209*) we read that *Kādambari* listens to a recitation of the *Mahābhārata*, *Nārada's* daughter reciting it 'in a gentle singing voice', whilst a pair of *Kinnaras* seated behind her accompany the recitation on the flute.

⁴ In the *Mahābhārata* itself there is already mention made of its 'hundred thousand' verses (I, 1, 107; XII, 343, 11; cf. above, p. 285 and *Hopkins, loc. cit.*, p. 9). The 18 books of the *Mahābhārata* have, in the Calcutta edition, 90,092 verses, of which 13,935 fall to the share of *Book XII* and 7,759 to *Book XIII*. With the whole *Harivaṃśa* the number of verses is 106,466. If the *Bhaviṣyaparvan* (s. above, p. 397) is omitted,

tury received its unquestionably latest sections such as *Book XIII* and the *Harivaṃśa*,¹ if it was at that time already a religious text-book and discourse, and if, a hundred years later, manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* had already reached Further India and were read in temples there, then we are justified in concluding that at least one or two centuries earlier, that is, in the 3rd or 4th century A.D., it must already have received that form which it still has to-day. On the other hand,² however, it can only have received this form after the origin and spread of Buddhism, to which it contains many references, indeed, only after Alexander's invasion of India, as the Yavanas, i.e., the Greeks (Ionians), are frequently mentioned. According to this the *Mahābhārata* cannot have received its present form earlier than the 4th century B.C. and not later than the 4th century A.D.³

there remain 101,154 verses, which number best agrees with the round number of 'a hundred thousand'. But the different recensions of the *Mahābhārata*, which often differ from each other in that the one recension omits a number of verses which are included in another, but, on the other hand, in another place inserts just as many verses which are missing in the latter, prove that the contents of the *Mahābhārata* could vary without the extent being changed.

¹ We cannot form any definite conclusion as to the date of the *Harivaṃśa* ('about the third century of the Christian era', R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., p. 36) on the basis of the occurrence of the word *dināra*=denarius. We may assume, however, that this appendix to the *Mahābhārata* did not come into existence very long before the 4th century A.D.; for though Roman gold coins were known in India as early as in the 1st century A.D. (s. E. J. Rapson, *Indian Coins*, 'Grundriss' II, 3 B., pp. 4, 17 ff., 25, 35; R. Sewell, *JRAS.*, 1904, 591 ff.), the Indian word *dināra* is only traceable from 400 A.D. onwards in Gupta inscriptions (Sewell, *loc. cit.*, p. 616). Cf. B. C. Mazumdar, *JRAS.*, 1907, pp. 408 f.; A. B. Keith, *JRAS.*, 1907, pp. 681 ff.; 1915, pp. 504 f. If the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa should really be the author of the *Vajrasūci* which is ascribed to him, the *Harivaṃśa* would already have been a part of the *Mahābhārata* in the 2nd century A.D., for two verses from the *Harivaṃśa* (1292 f.) are quoted in the *Vajrasūci* 3 (s. Weber, *Indische Streifen* I, p. 189) with the words 'for it is written in the *Bhārata*'.

² See Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 391 ff. If Dio Chrysostomos' statement that even the Indians sang Homer's poems and that they were well acquainted with the sufferings of Priam, etc., alluded to the *Mahābhārata* (as is the view of A. Weber, *Ind. Stud.* II, 161 ff.; Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata* IV, 163; Pischel, *KG.*, 195; H. G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, Cambridge, 1916, pp. 140 f., 171), then this statement would constitute our earliest external evidence of the existence of the *Mahābhārata* in the 1st century A.D. It is possible, however, (in fact, according to Jacobi in *Festschrift Wackernagel*, pp. 129 f., probable), that Dio's statement, which was repeated by Aelian, refers to an actual Indian translation of Homer. On various Greek words in the *Mahābhārata* s. Hopkins, *loc. cit.*, p. 372; Rawlinson, *loc. cit.*, p. 172 note.

³ Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* ('Grundriss' III, 1 B 1915, p. 1) considered 300-100 B.C. to be the probable date of the *Mahābhārata*, but in *Cambridge History* I, p. 258, he also gives the limits 4th century B.C. to 4th century A.D. S. Lévi (*JA.*, s. II, t. V, 1915,



Therefore, a great *re-modelling* of the *Mahābhārata*, or even the addition only of one of the great Books, cannot have taken place after the 4th century A.D. In fact, I cannot consider the hypothesis of one or indeed several remodellings to be either at all necessary or probable.¹ As in later periods the copyists deal rather arbitrarily with their text, so, in more ancient times, the rhapsodists, among whom the heroic songs must have been transmitted orally during centuries, probably took every possible liberty in the presentation of their songs : they lengthened scenes which pleased their audiences, and abridged others which made less impression. But the greatest alterations, by means of which the ancient heroic poem *gradually* became a compilation, which offered 'much' and therefore offered 'everyone something', can probably be explained by the fact that the transmission and preservation of the ancient heroic songs passed from the original singers to other classes, that the songs themselves were transplanted to other regions, and adapted to other times and a changing public. Already in very early times, as we have seen, the songs must have passed from the bards who were connected with the race of the Kurus to such as had relations with the race of the Pāṇḍavas. They spread from such districts where the Viṣṇu-cult prevailed to those where Śiva was worshipped as the highest god. The phases, too, through which the Kṛṣṇa-cult passed, left their traces in the epic poetry. As with other peoples, so with the Indians a time must have come when the creative poetic genius no longer manifested itself in works of heroic poetry, which latter ceased to be living poetry, and when only the *ancient* songs were still sung by the bards.² The old heroic time, too, came to an end, the time when the bards went forth into battle with the warriors as charioteers, so that after the victory was achieved, perhaps at a great

p. 122) concludes from the agreement between the geography of the Buddhist *Mahāmāyūrī* with that of the *Mahābhārata*, that the latter received its final redaction in the first three or four centuries A.D.

¹ But that does not say that separate parts, as for example, the *Virāṭa-parvan*, have not been remodelled. Cf. Hopkins in the *JAOS.*, 24, 1903, p. 54.

² Cf. H. Jacobi in *GGA.*, 1892, p. 632.



sacrificial feast, they could sing of the glorious deeds of the heroes. The epigones of these bards were an inferior class of literary men—the same who also devoted themselves to the handing down of the Purāṇas. These people were probably neither proper warriors nor proper Brahmans ; it is not for nothing that the law-books describe the Sūtas as bastards, who were said to be descended from the intermarriage of warriors with Brahman women or of Brahmans with Kṣatriya women. This very thing constitutes the peculiarity of the *Mahābhārata* in its present form : it is neither proper warrior-poetry nor proper religious poetry ; it is no longer an epic, but not yet a real Purāṇa.

The *Mahābhārata* may not have received a final form of some kind until after centuries of oral tradition it was first written down. Probably only Brahmans, Paṇḍits, participated in this editing and writing-down. It, however, we have come to the conclusion that the *Mahābhārata*, even in the 4th century A.D. or still earlier, was *not essentially* different, *on the whole*, in extent and contents, from the work as we have it now, then the words 'on the whole' and 'not essentially' must be very strongly emphasized. For additions and alterations, and, in fact, additions not only of single verses, but also of whole songs (such as hymns to Durgā and so on) have been made even during later centuries,¹ and a *critically established text of the Mahābhārata does not exist at all*.

When we speak of the 'Mahābhārata', we usually mean the text as we have it in the two standard editions which were published in India and were arranged by Indian paṇḍits, viz., the 'Calcutta Edition' of 1834-1839² and the 'Bombay Edition' with Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary.³ These two

¹ R. G. Bhandarkar (JBRAS., 20, 1900, p. 402) points out that interpolations were made in the Anuśāsanaparvan as late as at the Gupta period.

² This edition was begun by the Committee of Public Education and completed under the auspices of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and contains also the text of the *Harivaṃśa*.

³ It has appeared in several editions since 1862. See Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, III, pp. 2 ff., 9 ff., on this and other Indian editions. The edition by Pratapa Chandra Roy (Calcutta, 1882 ff.) is very handy, but is unfortunately spoiled by misprints. This edition is a work of true Indian piety and charity : it was printed by the aid of collections organised by the editor, for the purpose of free distribution, and 10,000 copies were given away *gratis*.

editions differ but slightly, and may be regarded as good representatives of the text as commented by Nīlakaṇṭha.¹ The Bengali and especially the Southern Indian manuscripts, however, often deviate from the latter text.² A *critical edition of the Mahābhārata* made on the basis of all the various classes of manuscripts from all parts of India is one of the greatest desiderata of Indology, and we hope that this need may be supplied in the near future.³ Not until the publication of a critical edition of this nature will it be possible to sift out many a passage at present included in our texts of the *Mahābhārata* as being certainly or at least very probably interpolations.⁴ Moreover, apart from the manuscripts, it will be possible to distinguish with some degree of certainty between what is authentic and what is spurious.⁵ For this purpose the older translations in the vernaculars, as

¹ Nīlakaṇṭha, one of the latest commentators, worked on a text which already contained a strong admixture of interpolations (s. Utgikar, *Virāṭaparvan*, pp. xii f.). Arjunamiśra is earlier than Nīlakaṇṭha, and the commentary Viṣamapadavivaraṇa is still earlier. Editions of the Virāṭaparvan and Udyogaparvan with several commentaries have been published in Bombay, at the Gujarati Printing Press, 1915 and 1920.

² Bengali MSS., though not only Bengali ones, were used for the 'Burdwan Edition'. On the Southern Indian MSS., cf. M. Winternitz, *Ind. Ant.*, 27, 1898, 67 ff., 92 ff., 122 ff. and H. Lüders, *Über die Grantharecension des Mahābhārata*, AGGW., 1901. Southern Indian MSS. were utilised for the 'Kumbhakonam Edition'; this is by no means a critical edition of the Southern recension, but a mixed recension, containing the interpolations of the Northern as well as the Southern MSS. In the Sabhāparvan of the Southern recension there is a long inserted passage about Kṛṣṇa, a kind of Kṛṣṇa-epic, in which Hopkins (*Festschrift Windisch*, pp. 72 ff. cf. *Cambridge History I*, p. 255) has traced many literal points of agreement with the *Harivaṃśa*.

³ The preparation of a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* was agreed upon in 1906 by the *International Association of Academies* (cf. 'Almanach der Wiener Akademie' 54, 1904, 248 f., 267 ff., 55, 1905, 238 ff.), but the preliminary work which had already been begun, was interrupted by the world war. A critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* is now in course of preparation by the *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona; s. A prospectus of a New and Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* undertaken by the Institute under the auspices of Shrimant Balasaheb Pant Pratinidhi, B.A., Chief of Aundh, 1919. R. Zimmermann and C. V. Vaidya in JBRAS., 25, 1920, pp. 358 ff.; N. B. Utgikar in *Ann. Bh. Inst.* II, 2, 1921, pp. 155 ff.; and the Virāṭaparvan of the *Mahābhārata* edited from original MSS. as a tentative work.....Poona, 1923; M. Winternitz, *Ann. Bh. Inst.* IV, 2, 1923, pp. 145 ff.; V. 1, 1924, pp. 19 ff.

⁴ Even now we can say with certainty, on the basis of the MSS., that, for instance, the story of Gaṇeśa, who writes down the *Mahābhārata*, in the Ādiparvan 1 (s. M; Winternitz, JRAS., 1898, pp. 380 ff. and cf. V. V. Iyer, *Preliminary Chapters of the Mahābhārata*, pp. 32 ff., 97 ff., 340 f.) and the Durgāstotra in the Virāṭaparvan 6 (s. Utgikar, *The Virāṭaparvan Ed.*, p. x xii) are interpolations.

⁵ See above, notes to pp. 246 f., 266, 267, 270, 275 f., 280, 300 ff. and A. Ludwig on interpolations in the Rājāsūya and Jarāsandha Parvans (*Mahābh.* II, 12 ff.) in OC xii, Paris, I, pp. 187 ff.

well as the Javanese and Persian translations of the *Mahābhārata* will have to be taken into account.¹

As long as there is no such critical edition of the text of the *Mahābhārata* available, the date of each section, nay sometimes of each single verse of the *Mahābhārata* must be determined separately, and there is very little meaning in, and no sort of *justification* for, saying, as it is so frequently said, that a certain name or subject 'already' occurs in the *Mahābhārata*. So much the less justification is there for connecting definite dates with the *Mahābhārata* as a whole, as not only were later insertions made in decidedly 'early' parts, but also, just as frequently, very ancient passages are found in the 'later' portions. Thus the whole of *Book I* of the *Mahābhārata* is certainly not 'ancient'; but that does not prevent many of the myths, legends and genealogical verses occurring in it from being very old.² Even in the *Harivaṃśa*, which was certainly only added late, we find very old verses and legends. But the expressions 'early' and 'late' with reference to whole books and large portions of the *Mahābhārata*, must always be used with caution and reserve.

This leads us to the most difficult question: What do we mean when we speak of 'old' and 'oldest' parts of the *Mahābhārata*? In other words: To what time do the beginnings of the *Mahābhārata* reach back?

Let us keep to facts. In the whole of *Vedic* literature there is no mention of a *Mahābhārata*, though in *Brāhmaṇas*

¹ For vernacular versions of the *Mahābhārata* s. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, III, pp. 100 ff. On the Tamil translation said to belong to the 11th century A.D., s. V. V. Iyer, *loc. cit.*, pp. 97 ff. and *passim*. The old Javanic translation is dated 996 A.D., s. K. Wulff, *Den old javanske Wirātaparva*, Kopenhagen, 1917; D. van Hinloopen Labberton, *JRAS.*, 1913, pp. 1 ff.; and H. Kern, *Verspreide Geschriften*, 1920, Vol. ix, pp. 39 ff., 215 ff. On the *Mahābhārata* on the island of Bali, s. R. Friederich, *JRAS.*, 1876, pp. 176 f., 179 ff. On the Persian translation s. Holtzmann, *loc. cit.*, III, p. 110, and A. Ludwig, *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, pp. 66 ff., 93 ff.

² The Yayāti legend, for instance, is surely at least as early as Patañjali, who teaches the formation of the word Yāyatika 'he who knows the Yayāti legend' in the *Mahābhāṣya* (4, 2, 60). F. Lacôte (*Essai sur Guṇādhyā*, pp. 138 f.) is most probably right in assuming that in olden times the episodes of the great epics were recited as independent poems, and I should like to add that this was most likely the case long before they were inserted into the epic.

and Upaniṣads there is frequent talk of Ākhyāna, Itihāsa, Purāṇa and Gāthā Nārāśaṃsī (s. above, p. 275). Even of the great, and probably historical, event which constitutes the central point of the epic, the bloody battle in the Kuru field, the Veda says not a word, though in the Brāhmaṇas this very Kuru field is so often mentioned as a place where gods and mortals celebrated great sacrificial feasts, that this event, if it had already taken place, would most certainly have been mentioned.¹ It is true that Janamejaya, the son of Parikṣit, and Bharata, the son of Duṣṣanta and of Sakuntalā, already appear in the Brāhmaṇas ; and already in a Kuntāpasong of the Atharvaveda Parikṣit is praised as a peace-loving king under whose rule the land of the Kurus prospered. In the works belonging to the *Yajurveda* there is frequent mention of Kurus and Pañcālas or Kurupañcālas ; and in connection with a sacrificial feast of the Kurupañcālas an anecdote is told in the Kāṭhaka (X, 6) of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the son of Vicitravirya. On the other hand, nowhere in the whole Veda is the name of Pāṇḍu or of his sons, the Pāṇḍavas, to be found, nowhere do such names as Duryodhana, Duṣṣāsana, Karna, etc., appear. The name Arjuna does, it is true, occur in a Brāhmaṇa, but as a secret name of the god Indra. The *Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra* (XV, 16) is the first place where we find mention of a war in Kurukṣetra which was disastrous for the Kauravas.² In the *Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra*.³ 'Bhārata

¹ See A. Ludwig, *Über das Verhältnis des mythischen Elementes zu der historischen Grundlage des Mahābhārata*, p. 6.

² Cf. E. Leumann, ZDMG., 48, 1894, 80 ff. ; Ludwig, *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, pp. 77 ff. ; Hopkins in *Cambridge History*, I, 252 f. B. C. Mazumdar (JRAS., 1906, 225 f.) suggests that the author of the *Mahābhārata* grafted the Kuru-Pāṇḍava story upon an older story of a war between Kurus and Pañcālas.

³ III, 4, 4. This passage has been much discussed. Cf. Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 389 f. ; Dahmann, *Das Mahābhārata als Epos und Rechtsbuch*, pp. 152 ff. ; Winternitz, WZKM., 14, 1900, pp. 55 f. ; Utgikar in Proc. IOC., Vol. II, pp. 46 ff. ; Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 18, 33. Utgikar is right in explaining the mention of the *Mahābhārata* in the *Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra* (and not in other Gṛhyasūtras) by the fact that Āśvalāyana counts as the pupil of Śaunaka, and, according to the frame-story of the *Mahābhārata*, Ugraśravas relates the *Mahābhārata* to Śaunaka. The date of the *Āśvalāyana-Gṛhyasūtra* is, however, entirely unknown, and lists of this nature could easily have been enlarged at any time in Āśvalāyana's school. For this reason we are not justified in drawing a chronological conclusion from this passage.

and *Mahābhārata*' are mentioned in a list of teachers and sacred books which are honoured by libations at the end of the study of the Veda. Pāṇini¹ teaches the formation of the names 'Yudhiṣṭhira', 'Bhīma' and 'Vidura', and the accent of the compound word '*Mahābhārata*'. Patañjali, however, is the first to make definite allusions to the story of the battle between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas.

What of *Buddhist* literature? In the Tipiṭaka, the Pāli canon of the Buddhists, the *Mahābhārata* is not mentioned. On the other hand, we find, in the oldest texts of the Tipiṭaka, poems after the style of the Ākhyānas with which we became acquainted in the Brāhmaṇas as a preliminary step to the epic.² The Jātakas, whose metrical portions (the *Gāthās*) belong to the Tipiṭaka, betray an acquaintance with the Kṛṣṇa-legend, but not with the *Harivaṃśa* and the Mausalaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*.³ The names occurring in the Jātaka-book, Pāṇḍava, Dhanañjaya (in the *Mahābhārata* an ordinary epithet of Arjuna), Yudhiṣṭhira (Pāli form of Yudhiṣṭhira), Dhataratṭha (Pāli form of Dhṛtarāṣṭra), Vidhura or Vidhūra (the Vidura of the *Mahābhārata*), and even the narrative, appearing in this work, of the self-choice of a husband and the five-husband marriage of Draupadī, bear testimony only to slight acquaintance with the *Mahābhārata*. For Pāṇḍava occurs in the Jātaka as the name of a horse,⁴ Dhṛtarāṣṭra as the name of various kings,⁵ Dhanañjaya and

¹ VIII, 3, 95; III, 2, 162; 4, 74; VI, 2, 38. But these scanty references do not admit of our drawing any conclusion as to the contents and extent of the epic known to Pāṇini.

² See above, p. 273. E. Windisch, *Māra und Buddha* (ASGW., Vol. XV, Leipzig, 1895), pp. 222 ff., and T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 1903, pp. 180 ff. Recitations of Ākhyānas are mentioned in the Brahmajālasutta, as well as conversations and exhibitions which the monk is to avoid (*Dialogues of the Buddha*, translated from the Pāli by T. W. Rhys Davids, London, 1899, p. 8). If, as the commentator says, recitations of the *Mahābhārata* and of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were to be understood by this, the author would surely have mentioned them by name.

³ The legend of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa) is told in the Ghatajātaka (No. 454), allusions to it are found also in Jātakas No. 512 and No. 530 (gāthā 20). See Lüders in ZDMG., 58, 1904, pp. 687 ff., also E. Hardy in ZDMG., 53, 1899, pp. 25 ff. The Jains have already in the third or second century B.C. made the Kṛṣṇa cult part of their religion, s. Jacobi in OC., VII, Vienna 1886, pp. 75 ff. and ZDMG., 42, 1888, pp. 493 ff.

⁴ Jātaka No. 185.

⁵ Dhataratṭha is a king of the gods in Jāt No. 382, a king of the Nāgas in Jāt. No. 543, a king of the flamingoes in Jāt. Nos. 502, 533, 534. In Jāt. No. 544 he heads a list of righteous kings. In the Mahāvastu Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the name of a Buddha, and once the name of a palace, s. E. Windisch, *Buddhas Geburt* (ASGW., 1908), pp. 101. 168.

Yudhiṣṭhira are only mentioned as Kuru kings who dwelt in Indraprastha, and Vidura is a wise man, who appears now as a domestic priest, and now as a minister of the court of Dhanañjaya or of Yudhiṣṭhira.¹ Draupadī, however, one of the most magnificent female characters of the epic, appears in the Jātaka as an example of feminine depravity, as she is not content with her five husbands, but also commits adultery with a hunchbacked servant.²

From these facts we must conclude that, before the conclusion of the Veda, there could *not* have existed an epic *Mahābhārata*, i.e., an epic poem which dealt with the war of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas and the battle on the Kuru field, and bore the title 'Bhārata' or 'Mahābhārata'; but that, on the other hand, such a poem must have existed already in the 4th century B.C., as the Sūtra works Śāṅkhāyana, Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini can scarcely be later. Now as the Pāli-canon of the Buddhists, which originated in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., betrays only quite a superficial knowledge of the *Mahābhārata*, it was probably at that time still little known in the *east* of India, where Buddhist literature originated.

We have seen, however, that some elements of our present *Mahābhārata* reach back into the Vedic period, and that much, especially in the didactic sections, is drawn from a *literary common property*, from which also Buddhists and Jains (probably already in the 5th century B.C.) have drawn.³

¹ In Jātaka No. 413 Dhanañjaya is a Kuru king residing in the city of Indapatta (Indraprastha) of the family of Yudhiṣṭhila (Yudhiṣṭhila-gotta), and Vidhūra is his purohita. In Jāt. No. 515 Dhanañjaya Korabya is a pious Kuru king, called Yudhiṣṭhila in the Gāthās, while the sage Vidhura is living at Benares. In the Vidhurapaṇḍita-Jātaka (No. 545, already mentioned in the second century B.C. with the title 'Vitura Punakiya jātakam' in a Bharhut inscription, s. E. Hultzsch, *Ind. Ant.*, 1892, p. 234) Vidhura is a minister of the Kuru king Dhanañjaya who (like Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Mahābhārata* is fond of playing at dice. But there is no allusion at all to the story of the *Mahābhārata*. In Jāt. No. 329 Dhanañjaya is a king of Benares. Vidhura also occurs as the name of a wise monk in the Therīgāthā 1188 and in the Majjhimanikāya 50.

² Jātaka No. 536 (gāthā 288). Cf. Winternitz, *JRAS.*, 1897, pp. 752 ff.

³ Verses *Mahābhārata*, XI, 7, 23 ff., which H. Raychaudhuri (*JASB.*, N. S., 18, 1922, pp. 269 ff.) believes to be quoted in the Besnagar, inscription, also belong to this literary common property. See above, pp. 275, 359 f., 365, 367. On the Rṣyaśṛṅga-legend in the Jātaka cf. above, pp. 351 ff. and H. Lüders in the treatise there cited. Another legend which the *Mahābhārata* (I, 107 f.) has in common with the Jātaka (No. 444) is that of Māṇḍavya, who as a punishment for having in his childhood impaled a fly on a thorn, was taken for a robber and impaled. (Cf. L. Scherman, *Materialien zur*



Finally, it must still be mentioned, that not only the events described in the epic, but also the innumerable names of kings and royal races, however historical some of the events and many names may appear, do not belong to Indian history in the true sense of the word. It is true that the Indians set the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira and the great war of the *Mahābhārata* at the beginning of the Kaliyuga, or Iron Age, i.e., 3102 B.C.; but this date for the beginning of the Kaliyuga is based upon the artificial calculation of Indian astronomers, and the association of this date with the conflict of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas is, of course, quite arbitrary.¹ The political history of India commences with the Śiśunāga kings Bimbisāra and Ajātasattu of Magadha, who are known to us as contemporaries of the Buddha, and we may also ascribe historical character to the kings of the Śiśunāga and Nanda dynasties mentioned in the Purāṇas.² With the great King Chandragupta (321 B.C.), the founder of the Maurya dynasty, we step on to firm historical ground in India. Of all these historical personalities there is no trace to be found in the *Mahābhārata*.³ This 'prehistoric' character of the narrative and of the heroes certainly indicates the great antiquity of the epic.

Summing up, we can say the following about the age of the *Mahābhārata* :

1. Single myths, legends and poems which are included in the *Mahābhārata*, reach back to the time of the Veda.
2. An epic *Bhārata* or *Mahābhārata* did not exist in the Vedic period.
3. Many moral narratives and sayings which our *Mahābhārata* contains, belong to the ascetic-poetry, which

Geschichte der indischen Visionsliteratur, Leipzig, 1892, pp. 53 f., and N. B. Utgikar in *Proc. II OC.*, 1922, pp. 221 ff. In the Jātaka this Māṇḍavya is a friend of Kaṇhadīpāyana, i.e. of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa).

¹ See R. Ramkrishna Bhagwat, *JBRAS.*, 20, 1899, pp. 150 ff. and J. F. Fleet, *JRAS.*, 1911, pp. 479 ff., 675 ff. In a similar way the Arabian astronomers have connected the same era with the Deluge.

² These kings reigned between 642 (or 600) B.C. and 322 B.C. Cf. Smith, *Early History*, pp. 44, 46 ff., and E. J. Rapson, *Cambridge History*, I, pp. 312 ff., 697.

³ E. W. Hopkins (in *Album Kern*, pp. 249 ff.), it is true, believes to have found references to the Mauryas, Aśoka and Candragupta in the *Mahābhārata*. But why should these be so hidden?

was drawn upon, from the 6th century B.C. onwards, also by Buddhists and Jainas.

4. If an epic *Mahābhārata* already existed between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C., then it was but little known in the native land of Buddhism.

5. There is no certain testimony for an epic *Mahābhārata* before the 4th century B.C.

6. Between the 4th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D. the transformation of the epic *Mahābhārata* into our present compilation took place, probably gradually.

7. In the 4th century A.D. the work already had, on the whole, its present extent, contents and character.

8. Small alterations and additions still continued to be made, however, even in later centuries.

9. One date of the *Mahābhārata* does not exist at all, but the date of every part must be determined on its own account.

THE RĀMĀYAṆA, BOTH A POPULAR EPIC AND AN ORNATE POEM

The *Rāmāyaṇa* differs essentially from the *Mahābhārata* in more respects than one. Above all it is much shorter and of much greater uniformity. While the *Mahābhārata* in its present form can scarcely be called an actual epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, even in the form in which we have it to-day, is still a fairly unified heroic poem. Moreover, while indigenous tradition names Vyāsa, an entirely mythical seer of ancient times, who was supposed to be at the same time the compiler of the Vedas and of the Purāṇas, as the author or editor of the *Mahābhārata*, it attributes the authorship of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to a poet named Vālmiki, and we have no reason to doubt that a poet of this name really lived and first shaped the ballads, which were scattered in the mouths of the bards, into the form of a unified poem. The Indians call this Vālmiki 'the first Kavi or author of ornate poetry' (*ādikavi*) and like to call the *Rāmāyaṇa* 'the first ornate poem' (*ādikāvya*). The beginnings of ornate epic poetry do indeed lead back to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and Vālmiki has always remained the pattern to which all later Indian poets admiringly aspired. The essential factor of Indian ornate

poetry, of the so-called '*kāvya*', is that greater importance is attached to the form than to the matter and contents of the poem, and that so-called *alamkāras*, i.e., 'embellishments', such as similes, poetic figures, puns, and so on, are used largely, even to excess. Similes are heaped on similes, and descriptions, especially of nature, are spun out interminably with ever new metaphors and comparisons. We find the first beginnings of these and other peculiarities of the classical ornate poetry in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. While we found in the *Mahābhārata* a mixture of popular epic and theological didactic poetry (*purāṇa*), the *Rāmāyaṇa* appears to us as a work that is popular epic and ornate poetry at the same time.

It is a true popular epic, just like the *Mahābhārata*, because, like the latter, it has become the property of the whole Indian people and, as scarcely any other poem in the entire literature of the world, has influenced the thought and poetry of the nation for centuries. In the introduction to the epic (a later addition) it is related that god Brahman himself invited the poet Vālmīki to glorify the deeds of Rāma in verse ; and the god is said to have promised him :

"As long as in this firm-set land
The streams shall flow, the mountains stand,
So long throughout the world, be sure,
The great Rāmāyaṇ shall endure."¹

This dictum has proved itself truly prophetic to the present day. Since more than two thousand years the poem of Rāma has kept alive in India, and it continues to live in all grades and classes of the people. High and low, prince and peasant, nobleman, merchant and artisan, princesses and shepherdesses, all are quite familiar with the characters and stories of the great epic. The men are elevated by the glorious deeds of Rāma and are edified by his wise speeches, the women love and praise Sītā as the ideal of conjugal fidelity, the highest virtue of woman. Old and young enjoy the wonderful feats of the true-hearted monkey Hanumat,

¹ 1, 2, 36 f. Translated by R. T. H. Griffith.

and they enjoy no less the gruesome tales of the man-eating giants and the demons endowed with magic power. Popular sayings and proverbs bear witness to the familiarity of the people with the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But also the teachers and masters of the various religious sects refer to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and draw upon it, when they wish to propagate religious and moral doctrines among the people; and the poets of all later times, from Kālidāsa down to Bhavabhūti and their epigones, have ever again drawn their materials from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and worked them up anew.¹ When we come to the modern Indian literature of the vernaculars, we find a Tamil translation of the Sanskrit epic as early as in the 11th century, and soon there follow imitations and translations in the vernaculars from the North to the South of India. The religious-philosophical Hindi poem *Rām-caritmānas*, based on the ancient epic, and composed about 1574 A.D. by the celebrated *Tulsī Dās*, has become almost a gospel for millions of Indians. Generations of Hindus in all parts of India have made the acquaintance of the old legend of Rāma in such modern translations. In the houses of the wealthy, recitations of the poem are arranged even in our own day. Dramatic versions, too, of the story of Rāma, as mentioned already in the *Harivaṃśa* (see above p. 396 Note), may still be seen performed at religious festivals in villages and towns in India at the present day. Thus, in Northern India, e.g., in Lahore, the Dassara feast is celebrated annually by the 'Rāma-play' (*Rām Līla*), at which the most popular scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are performed before an enormous audience.² Whether the worship of the monkey-king Hanumat as a local deity—widespread over India—and monkey-worship in general can be traced back to the popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or whether, on the contrary, the prominent part

¹ A. Baumgartner, *Das Rāmāyaṇa und die Rāmāliteratur der Inder*. Freiburg B. 1894, has given a survey of the whole Rāma literature.

² A vivid description of this festival from personal observation is given by J. C. Oman, *The Great Indian Epics: The Stories of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata*, London, 1899, pp. 75 ff. Cf. M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, 'Heritage of India series', 1921, pp. 79 f.

played by monkeys in the Rāma-legend must be explained by an older monkey-cult, remains an open question. It is certain, at all events, that none of the larger villages of India is without its image of the monkey-king Hanumat, and that monkeys are swarming in many temples, and are treated with great forbearance and love. This is particularly the case in Oudh, the ancient town of residence of Rāma.¹

Rāma himself, the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, was probably only later made into an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu and then worshipped as a god. The fact that the epic dealing with this divine Rāma then assumed the character of a sacred book cannot surprise us. Thus it is said at the end of the first canto (certainly not composed by Vālmiki) :

“Whoever this noble poem reads
That tells the tale of Rāma’s deeds,
Good as the scriptures, he shall be
From every sin and blemish free.
Whoever reads the saving strain,
With all his kin the heavens shall gain.
Brahmans who read shall gather hence
The higher praise for eloquence.
The warrior o’er the land shall reign
The merchant luck in trade obtain ;
And Śūdras listening ne’er shall fail
To reap advantage from the tale.”²

Significant also is the legend of Dāmodara II, a king of Kashmir, who was changed into a snake through a curse, and could not be released from the curse until he had had the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* read to him in one single day.³

But it is the very popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as in the case of the *Mahābhārata*, which became a reason for the fact that the poem has not come down to us in its original form, but much increased and disfigured by additions and alterations. The work as we have it before us, consists of seven books and contains about 24,000 couplets (ślokas) :

¹ Cf. W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, 2nd Ed., 1896, I, pp. 85 ff., W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology*, 2nd Ed., Calcutta, 1882, p. 405, Underhill, *loc. cit.*, pp. 119 f.

² Translated by R. T. H. Griffith.

³ Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, I, 166.

but which of these are early or late, genuine or spurious, we shall only be able to determine when we have given a short summary of the contents of the poem.

CONTENTS OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA¹

Book I, called *Bālakāṇḍa* (section of childhood), begins with an introduction upon the origin of the poem, and relates the story of the youth of *Rāma*. Put in this book, too, exactly as in the *Mahābhārata*, the course of the narrative is interrupted by the insertion of numerous brahmanical myths and legends; and some of these are the same which also appear in various versions in the *Mahābhārata*. Thus a mention of *R̥ṣyaśṛṅga* serves as a pretext for relating the legend with which we are already familiar.² The appearance of *Vasiṣṭha* and *Viśvāmitra* gives rise to the narration of numerous legends referring to these ṛṣis, famous from ancient days. Thus especially, the story of *Viśvāmitra*'s austerities, which he performed in order to become a Brahman, and of the temptations of this ṛṣi by the Apsarases *Menakā* and *Rambhā* is told in detail.³ The cycle of *Viśvāmitra*-legends also includes the ancient legend of *Śunaḥsepa*.⁴ Of the other myths and legends we may mention those of the *dwarf-incarnation* of the god *Viṣṇu* (I, 29), the birth of the war-god *Kumāra* or *Kārttikeya* (I, 35-37), the 60,000 sons of *Sagara* (the ocean) and the *descent of Gaṅgā* from heaven,⁵ and the *twirling of the ocean* by the gods and demons.⁶

¹ Translated in English verse by R. T. H. Griffith (in 5 vols. 1870-1874, in one vol., Benares, 1895, new ed. with a memoir by M. N. Venkataswami, Benares, 1915); into English prose by Manmathanath Dutt, Calcutta, 1892-94; condensed into English verse by Romesh Dutt, London, 1900; translated into Italian by G. Gorresio, Parigi, 1847-58, into French by H. Fauche, Paris, 1854-58, and by A. Roussel, Paris, 1903-1909; only *Book I* into German by J. Menrad, München, 1897, and a few extracts by Fr. Rückert, s. *Rückert Nachlese*, I, 271 ff. An outline of the story is given by J. C. Oman, *The Great Indian Epics*, pp. 19 ff.; a full account of the contents by H. Jacobi, *Das Rāmāyaṇa*, Bonn, 1893. *Scenes from the Ramayana* by R. T. H. Griffith, reprinted and published by the Panini Office, Allahabad, 1912.

² I, 9-11. See above, pp. 351 ff., and Lüders, NGGW., 1897, I, pp. 18 ff.

³ I, 51-65.

⁴ I, 62, cf. above, pp. 184 ff.

⁵ I 38-44. An outline of this story is given by J. C. Oman, *The Great Indian Epics*, pp. 87 ff. It has been translated into German by A. W. von Schlegel in his *Indische Bibliothek*, I (1823), pp. 50 ff.

⁶ I, 45. Cf. above, p. 342.

From the introduction we shall call attention only to the pretty story of the *invention of the śloka*¹ :

Vālmīki was wandering through the forest along the bank of a river, when he noticed a pair of curlews which were hopping about the grass singing sweetly. Suddenly a wicked fowler comes along and kills the male bird with his arrow. Now, when the bird is weltering in his blood and his mate mourning for him in pitiful tones, Vālmīki is seized with the deepest pity, and he utters a curse on the fowler. But the words of the curse of their own accord take the form of a śloka. Then god Brahman appears and bids the poet to sing of the deeds of Rāma in this very metre.

Book I gives the following history of Rāma's youth :

In the land of the Kosala (north of the Ganges), in the city of Ayodhyā (the present Oudh), there ruled a mighty and wise king, named *Daśaratha*. He was long childless. Then he resolved to offer a horse-sacrifice. The seer *Ṛṣyaśṛṅga* is engaged as the conductor of this great sacrifice, and he presents a specially powerful sacrificial offering efficacious in causing the begetting of sons. Just at that time the gods in heaven were much troubled by the demon Rāvaṇa. They therefore turn to *Viṣṇu* begging him to become a mortal, and as such kill Rāvaṇa. *Viṣṇu* agrees and resolves to be born on earth as the son of *Daśaratha*. So, after the horse-sacrifice was concluded, the three wives of King *Daśaratha* bore him four sons : *Kausalyā* bore *Rāma* (in whom *Viṣṇu* had incarnated himself), *Kaikeyī* bore *Bharata*, *Sumitrā* bore *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Śatrughna*. Of these four princes *Rāma*, the eldest, was the declared favourite of his father. But from his youth *Lakṣmaṇa* was deeply devoted to his elder brother. He was as his second self, and fulfilled all his wishes even before they were uttered.

When the sons had grown to manhood, the great ṛṣi *Viśvāmitra* came to the court of *Daśaratha*. *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* went forth with him to slay demons, for which they were rewarded by the ṛṣi with magic weapons. *Viśvāmitra* also accompanies the princes to the court of King *Janaka* of *Videha*. The latter had a daughter named *Sītā*. She was no common mortal, for once when the king was ploughing the field, she had come forth out of the earth—hence her name 'Sītā', 'the field-furrow'—and *Janaka* had brought her up as a daughter. But the king possessed a wonderful bow and had announced that he would give

¹ I, 2. Translated by F. von Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, p. 266. H. Jacobi (*Das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 80 f.) suggests that the basis of this legend may be the fact that the epic śloka in its final form is to be traced back to Vālmīki.

his daughter Sītā in marriage only to the man who could bend the bow. Many princes had already tried in vain. Then Rāma came and bent the bow, so that with a thundering crash, it broke in two. Highly delighted the king gives him his daughter in marriage. Daśaratha is informed and fetched, and then, amid great rejoicings the marriage of Rāma and Sītā is celebrated. And for many years they both lived in happiness and joy.

The real story begins with *Book II*, which describes the events at the royal court of Ayodhyā, and is therefore entitled *Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa*.¹

When Daśaratha felt old age approaching, he resolved to appoint his favourite son Rāma as heir to the throne, and caused all the necessary preparations for the consecration to be made by his domestic priest Vasiṣṭha. This is noticed by the hunchbacked maid of Queen Kaikeyī, and she urges her mistress to procure from the king the nomination of her own son Bharata as heir to the throne. The king had once promised to grant her two wishes, which she has up till now kept pending. Now she requests of the king that he will banish Rāma for fourteen years and appoint her son Bharata heir to the throne. The king is much cast down, but Rāma himself, as soon as he hears of the matter, does not hesitate for a moment to go into banishment, so that his father may not be guilty of breaking his word. In vain his mother Kausalyā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa try to keep him back. He insists that it is his highest duty to help his father to keep his word. He immediately also tells his wife Sītā that he is determined to go into banishment into the forest. He asks her to be friendly to Bharata, to live piously and continently at the court of Daśaratha and to serve his father and his mothers² obediently. But Sītā answers him in a magnificent speech on the duties of a wife, that nothing shall prevent her from following him into the forest :

“My lord, the mother, sire and son
 Receive their lots by merit won ;
 The brother and the daughter find
 The portions to their deeds assigned.
 The wife alone, whate’er await,
 Must share on earth her husband’s fate.
 So now the king’s command which sends
 Thee to the wild, to me extends.
 The wife can find no refuge, none,
 In father, mother, self, or son :

¹ A free poetical rendering of this Book in German by A. Holtzmann, *Indische Sagen*.

² It is interesting to note that Rāma always speaks of all the wives of his father as his ‘mothers’.

Both here, and when they vanish hence,
 Her husband is her sole defence.
 If, Raghu's son,¹ thy steps are led
 Where Daṇḍak's pathless wilds are spread,
 My feet before thine own shall pass
 Through tangled thorn and matted grass.....
 And as with thee I wander there
 I will not bring thee grief or care.
 I long, when thou, wise lord, art nigh,
 All fearless, with delighted eye,
 To gaze upon the rocky hill,
 The lake, the fountain, and the rill ;
 To sport with thee, my limbs to cool,
 In some pure lily-covered pool,
 While the white swan's and mallard's wings
 Are playing in the water-springs.
 So would a thousand seasons flee
 Like one sweet day, if spent with thee.
 Without my lord I would not prize
 A home with gods above the skies ;
 Without my lord, my life to bless,
 Where could be heaven or happiness ?”²

Rama describes to her all the terrors and dangers of the forest, in order to dissuade her from her resolve. But she remains firm and will hear nothing of a separation ; as Savitrī once followed Satyavat, so, she says, will she not leave him.

Then Rāma at last consents that Sītā shall go forth with him into the forest. Nor will faithful Lakṣmaṇa, of course, be hindered from following his brother into banishment. Clothed only in garments of bark, the banished ones go forth into the forest amidst the sympathy of the whole population.

But King Daśaratha cannot overcome his grief at the loss of his son. A few days after Rāma had gone into banishment, the king awakes from uneasy sleep about midnight. Then he remembers a crime he had committed in his youth ; he tells Kausalyā how he had once killed a young hermit by accident, when hunting, and how the blind father of the latter had cursed him, that he should die of grief at the loss of his son. Now this curse is being fulfilled :

“ ‘I see thee not : these eyes grow blind,
 And memory quits my troubled mind.

¹ Rāghava, ‘descendant of Raghu’, i.e., Rāma.

² II, 27. Translated by Griffith.

Angels of Death are round me : they
 Summon my soul with speed away.
 What woe more grievous can there be,
 That, when from light and life I flee,
 I may not, ere I part, behold
 My virtuous Rāma, true and bold ?
 Grief for my son, the brave and true,
 Whose joy it was my will to do,
 Dries up my breath, as summer dries
 The last drop in the pool that lies
 Ah Raghu's son, ah mighty-armed,
 By whom my cares were soothed and charmed,
 My son in whom I took delight,
 Now vanished from thy father's sight !
 Kausalyā, ah, I cannot see ;
 Sumitrā, gentle devotee !
 Alas, Kaikeyī, cruel dame,
 My bitter foe, thy father's shame !'

Kausalyā and Sumitrā kept
 Their watch beside him as he wept,
 And Daśaratha moaned and sighed,
 And grieving for his darling died."¹

After the death of the king, Bharata, who is staying in Rājagṛha, is sent for, and invited by his mother Kaikeyī, as well as by the counsellors, to ascend the throne. But Bharata will hear nothing of it, and declares with determination that the sovereignty belongs to Rāma, and that he will bring him back. With a great retinue he sets out to fetch his brother. Meanwhile, Rāma is sojourning in the Citrakūṭa hills, and is just describing the beauties of the landscape to Sītā,² when clouds of dust are seen to rise and the noise of an approaching army is heard. Lakṣmaṇa climbs up a tree and sees the army of Bharata drawing near. He believes that it is a hostile attack, and is greatly enraged. But he soon observes that Bharata leaves his army behind and draws near alone. He approaches Rāma, throws himself at his feet, and the brothers embrace one another. Now Bharata, with many tears and reproaches against himself and his mother Kaikeyī, reports to Rāma the death of his father, and asks him to return and commence his reign. Rāma says he could not reproach either him or his mother ; but that which his father had commanded, must even now be dear to him, and he will never depart from his decision to spend fourteen years in the forest. In vain are all the entreaties of Bharata,

¹ II, 64. Translated by Griffith.

² II, 94. A magnificent description of nature, such as are not rare in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

who reminds him of the departure of their father. Rāma, with many lamentations, offers the funeral libation for the departed one, but remains firm in his resolve. Rāma comforts his mourning brother in a magnificent speech on the natural, necessary transitoriness of existence, and the inevitableness of death, which makes every lament seem unreasonable.

“In scatterings end collections all ;
 High towering piles at length must fall ;
 In parting every meeting ends ;
 To death all life of creatures tends.
 The early fall to earth is sure,
 Of fruits on trees that hang mature.
 Of mortals here behold a type ;
 They, too, succumb, for death when ripe.
 As houses fall when long decay
 Has worn the posts which formed their stay,
 So sink men's frames, when age's course
 Has undermined their vital force.....
 As logs that on the ocean float,
 By chance are into contact brought,
 But, tossed about by wind and tide,
 Together cannot along abide ;—
 So wives, sons, kinsmen, riches, all
 Whate'er our own we fondly call,—
 Obtained, possessed, enjoyed, to-day,
 To-morrow all are snatched away.
 As, standing on the road a man
 Who sees a passing caravan,
 Which slowly winds across the plain,
 Cries, “I will follow in your train,”
 So men the beaten path must tread
 On which their sires of yore have led.
 Since none can nature's course elude,
 Why o'er thy doom in sorrow brood ?”¹

The counsellors, too, come in order to invite Rāma to begin his reign. One of these, *Jābāli*, a great heretic and representative of nihilistic views,

¹ II, 105, 16 ff. Translated by J. Muir, *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers*, pp. 41 f. Sayings of this kind belong to the common property of Indian poets, which has already been mentioned several times. We meet them again almost literally in the *Mahābhārata*, in *Purāṇas*, in the legal literature (e.g., *Viṣṇusmṛti*, XX, 32), in the Buddhist proverbial wisdom, in the sayings of Bhartṛhari, and so on. Rāma's speech of consolation also forms the nucleus of the *Daśaratha-Jātaka*, cf. below p. 446 f.

tries to drive away his moral scruples. Everyone lives only for himself, he says, one need not trouble about father and mother, death is the end of all things, the talk of a Beyond is only spread abroad by crafty priests, in order to procure presents,—therefore he should only consult his common sense and ascend the throne. Rāma energetically rejects these teachings of the nihilist.¹ Even the representations of the pious priest Vasiṣṭha cannot make him change his mind. And finally Bharata is compelled to consent to conduct affairs for Rāma. Rāma gives him his sandals as a symbol of sovereignty,² and Bharata returns to Ayodhyā, where Rāma's sandals are solemnly placed on the throne as the representatives of the king, while he himself transfers his residence to Nandigrāma, in order from there to manage the affairs of the country for Rāma, as his representative.

Beginning with *Book III*, which describes the forest-life of the exiles, and hence is called *Aranya-kāṇḍa*, 'Forest section', we leave, as it were, the world of reality, and enter a miraculous fairy-tale world, from which we do not emerge before the end of the poem. While *Book II* shows us the life at an Indian prince's court, and begins from a court intrigue, such as in reality occurred in India more than once, the only fabulous element in it being perhaps the exaggerated generosity of the two brothers Rāma and Bharata, *Book III* begins the battles and adventures of Rāma with fabulous and demoniacal beings.

When the exiles had lived in the Daṇḍaka forest for a long time, the forest-hermits living there besought Rāma for protection against the Rākṣasas. Rāma promises this protection, and from that time is incessantly engaged in battles against these devilish monsters. The man-eating giant Virāḍha is the first to be killed.³ Fateful for the exiles is the meeting

¹ The expression corresponds exactly to the Sanskrit *nāstika*, "one who teaches that nothing exists (*nāsti*).” Here these words are placed in the mouth of Rāma: "Like a thief is the *Buddha*, and know thou that the *Tathāgata* is a *nāstika*." This verse, which does not even appear in all the recensions, has long ago been proved spurious. Jacobi (*loc. cit.*, pp. 88 f.) considers the entire Jābāli episode to be an interpolation. A. Hillebrandt, however, observes (*Festschrift Kuhn*, p. 23): "The situation is described very well, and such an effective contrast has been made between the materialist and the pious Rāma that I cannot consider this passage as spurious."

² On the shoe as a symbol of law in old Norse and old German law, cf. Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*, 4th Ed., 1899, I, 213 ff. A. Holtzmann has already compared the strikingly similar Hebrew custom, Ruth 4, 7.

³ Here again follow (in Cantos 8-14) all sorts of legends, e.g., of the Ṛṣi *Agastya* and others, just as in *Book I*, and in the *Mahābhārata*.

with *Śūrpaṇakhā* ('having claws as big as winnows'), the sister of Rāvaṇa. This she-devil falls in love with Rāma and makes amorous proposals to him. But he refers her to his brother Lakṣmaṇa who is not yet married.¹ Lakṣmaṇa scornfully declines her advances. Full of rage she is about to swallow Sītā, when Lakṣmaṇa cuts off her ears and nose. Howling she flees to her brother *Khara*. The latter sets out against Rāma, first with 14, then with 14,000 Rākṣasas, but Rāma slays them all. After *Khara* too has fallen, *Śūrpaṇakhā* hastens to *Laṅkā*, a fabulous land beyond the ocean,² and incites her brother *Rāvaṇā*, a ten-headed monster and ruler of *Laṅkā*, to revenge against Rāma. At the same time she describes to him the wondrous beauty of Sītā in the most alluring colours, and incites him to gain possession of her and to make her his wife. Then Rāvaṇa arises, drives in his golden chariot through the air across the ocean and there meets his friend, the demon *Mārīca*, who is living there as an ascetic. With *Mārīca*'s aid he succeeds in parting Sītā from her protectors and stealing her away. He bears her away on his chariot through the air. Sītā cries loudly for help. The vulture *Jaṭāyus*, an old friend of Daśaratha's, comes flying along ; he succeeds in smashing Rāvaṇa's chariot, but finally he himself is overcome by Rāvaṇa. The demon again seizes Sītā with his claws and flies away with her. As she is borne flying through the air, the flowers fall from her hair, and the jewelled bands slip from her feet to the ground. The trees, in whose branches the wind rustles, seem to call to her : "Be not afraid !" the lotuses droop their heads, as though they were mourning for their beloved friend ; lions, tigers and other wild beasts run behind the shadow of Sītā, as if in rage ; with tear-washed faces, *i.e.*, the waterfalls, and up-stretched hands, *i.e.*, the towering peaks, the hills seem to make moan for Sītā. Even the great sun, whose rays are darkened and whose orb pales at sight of the stolen Sītā, seems to lament : "There is no more justice, no truth, no righteousness, no innocence, if Rāvaṇa steals Sītā, the wife of Rāma" (III, 52, 34-39). But Rāvaṇa flies with the stolen lady across the ocean to *Laṅkā*, where he accommodates her in his harem. He conducts her round his palace, shows her all its splendours, and describes to her the immeasurable riches and marvels over which he rules. With coaxing words he tries to persuade her to become his wife. But Sītā answers him full of anger, that she will never break her faith with Rāma, and will never allow herself to be touched by him. Then Rāvaṇa threatens that, if

¹ This passage is one of the many proofs of the spuriousness of the first Book, in which it is related that the brothers of Rāma were married at the same time as Rāma.

² Not, as is usually assumed, Ceylon. It was not till a much later time that *Laṅkā* was identified with Ceylon, see Jacobi, *Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 90 ff. ; M. V. Kibe, *Rawana's Lanka Discovered*, 2nd Ed., 1920, attempts to determine the geographical position of *Laṅkā*.

she does not yield herself to him within twelve months, he will have her cut in pieces by the cooks and will eat her for his breakfast. Thereupon he has her taken to a grotto, and delivers her to the strict guardianship of the Rakṣasa women.

Meanwhile Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have returned, and, to their horror, find the hut empty. In vain they seek Sītā in the forest. Rāma raises a bitter lament, he questions the trees, the rivers, the hills and the animals—but none can give him news of Sītā. At last they find the flowers and ornaments which fell from Sītā in her flight, soon they find the ruins of Ravaṇa's chariot, scattered weapons and other traces of a fight. Rāma cannot but believe that Sītā has been killed by Rākṣasas, and in mad passion, he declares his intention of destroying the whole world. He will fill the air with his arrows, stay the course of the wind, annihilate the rays of the sun and envelop the earth in darkness, hurl down the summits of the hills, dry up the lakes, destroy the ocean, uproot the trees, nay more, even annihilate the gods themselves if they do not give him back his Sītā. Only with much trouble does Lakṣmaṇa succeed in soothing the raving one and in persuading him to renew the search. Then they find the vulture Jaṭāyus weltering in his blood. Dying, he still relates to them what has occurred, but dies in the middle of his story. Wandering towards the south the brothers encounter a roaring, headless monster, *Kabandha*, whom they deliver from a heavy curse. In gratitude for this, he advises Rāma to ally himself with the monkey-king *Sugrīva*, who will be helpful to him in the recovery of Sītā.

Book IV, the *Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa*, tells of the alliance which Rāma forms with the monkeys, in order to win back Sītā.

The brothers reach the lake Pampā, the sight of which causes Rāma to fall into a melancholy mood; for it is spring, and the sight of the awakening of nature arouses in him great longing for the distant loved one.¹ Here they soon meet with the monkey-king *Sugrīva*. He tells them that he has been robbed of his wife and his dominion by his brother *Vālin*, and driven from his kingdom. Rāma and *Sugrīva* now form a close bond of friendship. Rāma promises to help *Sugrīva* against *Vālin*, while *Sugrīva* promises to aid Rāma in the recovery of Sītā. Before *Kiṣkindhā*,² the residence of *Vālin*, a battle takes place between the hostile monkey brothers. Rāma comes to *Sugrīva*'s aid and kills *Vālin*. The monkey *Sugrīva* is consecrated as king and *Aṅgada*, the son of *Vālin*, as heir to the throne.

¹ The whole first canto is an elegy, which might be entitled 'Longing for the beloved in spring', quite in the style of the later ornate poetry.

² Hence the title of *Book IV*.

Among the counsellors of Sugrīva, *Hanumat*,¹ the son of the wind-god, is the wisest. Sugrīva has the greatest confidence in him, and commissions him to find Sītā. Accompanied by a host of monkeys under the leadership of *Aṅgada*, the clever Hanumat starts on his way to the south. After many adventures they meet with *Sampāti*, a brother of the vulture *Jaṭāyus*. The latter tells them how once, when he wanted to fly to the sun in a race with his brother,² his wings were scorched, so that he had now to stay helpless on the Vindhya hills. But he had seen how Rāvaṇa had stolen Sītā away and taken her to Laṅkā. He describes to them the position of Laṅkā, and the monkeys descend to the ocean. But when they saw the immeasurable billowing sea before them, they simply despaired of getting across it. Aṅgada, however, tells them not to be despondent, 'for despondency kills a man, as the angry snake kills a boy' (IV, 64, 9). Then they take counsel together, as to who can jump the furthest, and it appears that none can jump so far as Hanumat. The latter then ascends the hill Mahendra and prepares to leap across the ocean.

Book V describes the wonderful island of Laṅkā, the town of residence, the magnificent palace and harem of Rāvaṇa, and relates how Hanumat gives Sītā news of her beloved Rāma, and at the same time finds out the strength of the enemy. The book may have received the title *Sundara-kāṇḍa*, 'the beautiful section', on account of the many poetical descriptions,³ or because it contains even more fabulous stories than all the other books. If the whole second half of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is already a 'romantic' epic, then this fifth Book is very specially 'romantic', and for Indian taste the romantic is always the most beautiful.

With a mighty leap, which causes the hill Mahendra to tremble in its depths and terrifies all the living beings on the hill, the monkey Hanumat rises into the air and flies across the ocean. After a flight of *four days*, on which he encounters various adventures and performs miracles, he finally reaches Laṅkā. From a hill he looks at the town, which seems to him almost impregnable. He makes himself as small as a cat,⁴ and after sunset, penetrates into the town. He views the whole demon-city, the

¹ Also *Hanūmat*. The name signifies: 'He with the jaws'. According to IV, 66, 24, he is so called because Indra crushed his jaws with the thunderbolt.

² Like Icarus. This myth is at first briefly touched upon (IV, 58), then (IV, 59-63) related in purāṇa-like diffusiveness.

³ Thus according to Jacobi, *Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 124.

⁴ According to another explanation: 'as a horse-fly'. Hanumat can change his form at pleasure.

palace of Rāvaṇa and the wonderful chariot called Puṣpaka, on which the Rākṣasa is wont to drive through the air. He also penetrates into Rāvaṇa's harem, where he sees the powerful demon prince reposing in the midst of his beautiful women.¹ After long fruitless searching, he at last finds Sītā, consumed by grief, in the Aśoka-grove. He makes himself known as a friend and messenger of Rāma. She tells him that Rāvaṇa has threatened to devour her, and that she must die after two months, if Rāma does not deliver her before then. Hanumat assures her of the certainty of Rāma's coming to deliver her.²

Thereupon Hanumat returns to the hill, flies across the ocean and relates his adventures in Laṅkā to the monkeys awaiting him there. Then he goes to Rāma, reports to him how he found Sītā, and delivers him her message.

Book VI, which describes the great battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, hence called '*Yuddha-kāṇḍa*' 'battle section', is the most extensive of all.

Rāma praises Hanumat for the successful execution of his errand, and heartily embraces him. But he despairs at the thought of the difficulty of getting across the ocean. Sugrīva advises the construction of a bridge to Laṅkā. Hanumat gives an exact description of the city of Rāvaṇa and its fortification, and declares that the principal heroes of the monkey-host would be able to overcome it. So Rāma commands that

¹ The nightly seraglio-scene (V. 9-11) is described vividly in the style of ornate poetry, and forcibly recalls the description in the Buddha legend, where Prince Siddhārtha, surrounded by his wives, awakens at the hour of midnight, and is seized with disgust at sensual pleasure. The similarity of the situation and of the description is sufficiently striking to justify the supposition that it is an imitation of the description in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (V, 47 ff.). For as E. B. Cowell rightly remarks (in the preface to his edition of the *Buddhacarita*), this scene forms an essential part of the Buddha legend, while in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is only an entirely unnecessary embellishment. Of course we must not ascribe the piece to Vālmīki himself, but the imitation must be ascribed to a later interpolator.

² With this, Hanumat's mission is fulfilled, and the following narrative (41-55) is doubtless a later interpolation: in order to test the strength of the enemy, Hanumat instigates a quarrel by destroying the Aśoka-grove. In tremendous battles with thousands of Rākṣasas he alone remains the victor. But finally he is put into fetters and taken before the demon-king. Hanumat introduces himself as the messenger of Rāma and demands the return of Sītā. Rāvaṇa decides to kill him, but is persuaded to spare him as an ambassador. However, in order to punish him, he causes cotton rags soaked in oil to be wrapped round the monkey's tail and to be set alight. Sītā hears of it, and prays to Agni, the fire-god, that he may not burn Hanumat. The monkey now leaps with his burning tail from house to house, and sets the whole town on fire, while he himself escapes uninjured. The spuriousness of this passage has been indisputably proved by Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 31 ff.

the army shall be prepared for the march, and soon the tremendous monkey-army sets out southwards towards the sea-shore.

When the news of the approaching army of monkeys had reached Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa summoned his counsellors, all great and powerful Rākṣasas, to a council. Now while all the other relatives and counsellors urge Rāvaṇa in boasting speeches to fight, *Vibhīṣaṇa*, Rāvaṇa's brother, points to unfavourable omens and advises him to return Sītā. Rāvaṇa is much enraged at this, and accuses him of envy and ill-will; relatives, he says, are always the worst enemies of a king and hero. Feeling deeply offended by his brother, *Vibhīṣaṇa* renounces him, flies across the ocean with four other Rākṣasas and allies himself with Rāma. On the advice of *Vibhīṣaṇa* Rāma appeals to the Ocean-god himself to aid him in crossing the sea. The latter calls the monkey Nala, the son of the divine master-builder Viśvakarman, and instructs him to bridge the ocean. At Rāma's command, the monkeys bring rocks and trees, in a few days a bridge is built over the ocean, and the whole of the great army passes over to Laṅkā.

Now Rāvaṇa's residence town is surrounded by the army of monkeys. Rāvaṇa gives the command for a general sortie. A battle takes place, also many cases of single combat between the chief heroes of the two fighting armies. Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumat, Aṅgada and the bear-king Jāmbavat are the most prominent fellow-combatants of Rāma, while on Rāvaṇa's side, his son Indrajit is the most conspicuous. The latter is versed in all magic arts and knows how to make himself invisible at any moment.

Thus, on one occasion, he inflicts dangerous wounds on Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. But in the night, on the advice of the bear-king Jāmbavat, the monkey Hanumat flies to Mount Kailāsa, in order to fetch thence four particularly powerful healing herbs. As these herbs are concealed, the monkey simply takes the whole mountain-peak with him and carries it to the battle-field, where, through the fragrance of the healing herbs, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and all the wounded are immediately healed. Hereupon Hanumat puts the mountain back into its place.

On another occasion, Indrajit, versed in magic, comes out of the city carrying on his war-chariot a magically produced image of Sītā, which he ill-treats and beheads before the eyes of Hanumat, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkeys. Horrified, Hanumat reports to Rāma that Sītā is killed; Rāma falls into a swoon. Lakṣmaṇa breaks into lamentations and utters a blasphemous speech with bitter complaints against Fate that has no regard to virtue (VI, 83, 14 ff.) but he is soon enlightened by *Vibhīṣaṇa* that the whole affair is only a delusion produced by Indrajit. Finally, Indrajit is killed by Lakṣmaṇa after a violent duel.

Furious at the death of his son, Rāvaṇa himself now appears on the field of battle. A dreadful duel between Rāma and Rāvaṇa takes place,

continuing day and night. The gods themselves come to Rāma's aid, especially Indra with his chariot and his projectiles. But as many times as Rāma strikes off Rāvaṇa's heads, so often a new head grows again. At last he succeeds in piercing Rāvaṇa's heart with a weapon created by god Brahman himself. There is great rejoicing in the army of the monkeys, and wild flight of the Rākṣasas.

Now Rāvaṇa is solemnly buried and Vibhīṣaṇa is installed as king in Laṅkā by Rāma.

Only now does Rāma send for Sītā, and proclaim to her the joyous news of the victory—but then, in the presence of all the monkeys and Rākṣasas, he rejects her. He has (so he declares) had his revenge for the ignominy he has had to suffer, but with her he will have no more to do ; for a woman who has sat on the lap of another man, and who has been looked at with lustful eyes by another, could no longer be received as a wife by Rāma. Then Sītā raises a bitter complaint against the unjust suspicion of Rāma, and asks Lakṣmana to erect a pyre : for now nothing remained for her but to enter the fire. Rāma gives his consent, the pyre is erected and lighted, and Sītā, invoking the fire as witness of her innocence, rushes into the flames. Then the god Agni arises out of the burning pyre with the uninjured Sītā and delivers her to Rāma, assuring him, in a solemn speech, that she has always kept her faith with him, and even in the palace of the Rākṣasa remained pure and innocent. Thereupon Rāma declares that he himself never had any doubts concerning Sītā's innocence, but that it was necessary to prove her innocence before the eyes of the people.

Now Rāma and his people, accompanied by Hanumat and the monkeys, return to Ayodhyā, where they are received with open arms by Bharata, Śatrughna, and the mothers. They enter amidst the rejoicings of the populace. Rāma is consecrated as king and rules happily and for the welfare of his subjects.

This really concludes the story of Rāma, and there can be no doubt at all that the original poem ended with *Book VI*, and that the following *Book VII*, is a later addition. This seventh book—it is called *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, 'last section'—again contains numerous myths and legends similar to those which also occur in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*, which have nothing at all to do with the Rāma-legend. The first cantos deal with the origin of the Rākṣasas and the battles of Indra with *Rāvaṇa*,¹ after which the story of the

¹ VII, 1-34. Jacobi calls the piece *Rāvaṇeśa*.



youth of *Hanumat* is related (VII, 35 f.). Only about a third of the books deals with Rāma and Sītā, and the following is related :

One day Rāma is informed that the people are expressing their disapproval at his having received Sītā back after she (during her abduction) had sat on the lap of Rāvaṇa ; it was feared that this might have a bad effect on the morals of the women in the land. The model king Rāma is very sad about this ; he cannot bear the reproach that he is setting the people a bad example, and requests his brother Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā away and desert her in the forest. With a heavy heart Lakṣmaṇa takes her on his chariot, leads her to the Ganges and brings her to the further bank of the river, where he discloses to her that Rāma has rejected her on account of the suspicions of the people. In deep grief, but yet full of submission to her fate, Sītā only sends Rāma friendly greetings. Soon after, some hermit-boys find the weeping Sītā in the forest and lead her to the hermitage of the ascetic *Vālmiki*. The latter delivers her into the protection of hermit-women. After some time she gives birth, in the hermitage, to the twins *Kuśa* and *Lava*.

Several years pass. The children have grown up and become pupils of the ascetic and singer *Vālmiki*. At this time Rāma organises a great horse-sacrifice. This is also attended by *Vālmiki* and his pupils. He instructs two of them to recite, in the sacrificial assembly, the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by him. All listen with rapture to the wonderful recitation. But Rāma soon discovers that the two youthful singers *Kuśa* and *Lava*,¹ who recite the poem to the accompaniment of the lute, are sons of Sītā. Then he sends messengers to *Vālmiki* and asks him to arrange that Sītā may purify herself by an oath before the sacrificial assembly. The next morning *Vālmiki* brings Sītā, and, in a solemn speech, the great ascetic declares that she is pure and innocent, and that her children, the twin-brothers *Kuśa* and *Lava*, are the true sons of Rāma. Thereupon Rāma declares that, though he is satisfied with the words of *Vālmiki*, he still desires that Sītā shall purify herself by means of an oath. Then all the gods descended from heaven. But Sītā, with downcast glance and folded hands, said : "As truly as I have never, even with one thought, thought of another than Rāma—may Goddess Earth open her arms to me ! As truly as I have always, in thought, word and deed, honoured only Rāma—may Goddess Earth open her arms to me ! As I have here spoken the truth and never known another than Rāma—may Goddess Earth open her arms to me !" Scarcely was the oath finished, than there arose out of the earth a heavenly throne, borne on the heads of snake-demons,

¹ Professional 'travelling singers', who sang epic songs to the accompaniment of the lute, were called *kuśilava* ; the names *Kuśa* and *Lava* were invented as a kind of etymological interpretation of the word *kuśilava*. Cf. Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 62 f., 67 f.

and Mother Earth, seated on the throne, embraced Sītā and vanished with her into the depths. In vain Rāma now adjures the Goddess Earth to give him back his Sītā. Only god Brahman appears and comforts him with the hope of reunion in heaven. Soon afterwards Rāma gives up the government to his two sons Kuśa and Lava, and himself enters heaven, where he again becomes Viṣṇu.

The thread of this narrative in *Book VII* is constantly interrupted by the interpolation of numerous myths and legends. There we find again the familiar legends of *Yayāti* and *Nahūṣa* (VII, 58f.), of the *slaying of Vṛtra by Indra*, who by this becomes guilty of Brahman-murder (VII, 84-87), of *Urvaśī*, the beloved of the gods Mitra and Varuṇa, who in a marvellous manner beget the Ṛṣis *Vasiṣṭha* and *Agasthya* (VII, 56f.), of King *Ila*, who as the woman *Ilā* bears *Purūravas* (VII, 87-90), and so on. Many truly brahmanical legends with an exaggerated tendency compare well with similar stories of *Book XIII* of the *Mahābhārata*. Thus the story of the ascetic *Śambūka*, belonging to the Śūdra caste, whose head Rāma strikes off, for which he is commended by the gods, because a Śūdra should not take it upon himself to practise asceticism; or of the god who is compelled to eat his own flesh because, in a former incarnation, he practised asceticism, but omitted to make presents to the Brahmans (VII, 73-81), and similar 'edifying' legends. The whole of the book bears the character of the latest parts of the *Mahābhārata*.

THE GENUINE AND THE SPURIOUS IN THE RĀMĀYAṆA¹

There can be no doubt that the whole of *Book VII* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was added later to the work: but it has also long been recognised that the whole of *Book I* cannot have belonged to the original work of Vālmiki. Not only are there numerous internal contradictions in the book, but the language and style, too, stand out as inferior to those of *Books II to VI*. Moreover, in the genuine parts of the poem

¹ The problems of the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been fully dealt with first by A. Weber, *Über das Rāmāyaṇa* (ABA., 1870). The fundamental work on these problems is that of H. Jacobi, *Das Rāmāyaṇa, Geschichte und Inhalt*, Bonn, 1893. See also C. V. Vaidya, *The Riddle of the Rāmāyaṇa*, Bombay and London, 1906; and Dineschandra Sen, *The Bengali Ramayanas*, Calcutta, 1920.

there is never any reference to the events in *Book I*, in fact there are details in this book which directly contradict the statements of later books.¹

Only in *Books I* and *VII* is Rāma throughout conceived as a divine being, an incarnation of the god *Viṣṇu*. In *Books II* to *VI*, apart from a few passages which are doubtless interpolated,² he is always only a mortal hero and in all indisputable genuine parts of the epic there is no indication whatever of his being conceived as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*. Where mythology enters into the genuine parts of the poem, it is not *Viṣṇu*, but the god *Indra* who, as in the *Veda*, is regarded as the highest god.

It is characteristic, too, of the two *Books I* and *VII* that, as we have seen, the thread of the narrative is frequently interrupted, and, in the manner of the *Mahābhārata* and of the *Purāṇas*, numerous brahmanical myths and legends are inserted. There are only very few passages in *Books II* to *VI* (e.g., at the beginning of *Book III*) where this kind of thing occurs also. The additions and extensions in *these* books—and they are numerous enough—are generally of quite a different kind. They consist chiefly of the *spinning out* of the most beautiful and most popular passages by the singers by means of their own additions. We must imagine the *Rāmāyaṇa* as having been orally transmitted for a long time—perhaps through centuries—in the circles of travelling singers like the brothers Kuśa and Lava in the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. These singers or minstrels regarded the epic songs as their property, with which they took every kind of liberty. If they noticed that the audience was deeply moved by the touching plaints of *Sītā*, *Daśaratha* or *Kausalyā*, they would fabricate a number of additional verses, so that they could linger over it for a longer time; if the battle-scenes met with greater appreciation from a more warlike public, then it was easy for the singer to gather together more and more new heroes for duels, to have a few more thousands or tens of

¹ E.g., the marriage of *Lakṣmaṇa*, s. above p. 428 Note 1.

² Thus, for instance, at the end of *Book VI*, where, at the moment when *Sītā* ascends the pyre, all the gods come on the scene and praise Rāma as god *Viṣṇu*.

thousands of monkeys or Rākṣasas slaughtered or to relate again with a little variation a heroic deed which had already been related ; if the audience enjoyed comical scenes, especially those in which the monkeys appear, then it was tempting for the singer not only to spin out such scenes, but also to add new similar ones ; if he had a learned audience of Brahmans before him, he sought to win their favour by spinning out the didactic portions, adding new moral maxims or inserting aphorisms taken from elsewhere ; especially ambitious rhapsodists would extend the descriptions of nature, probably already popular in the ancient and genuine poem, by means of additions in the style of the ornate court poetry.¹ Probably the *Rāmāyaṇa*, like the *Mahābhārata*, only received a more or less definite form when it was written down.² But this must have happened at a time when the poem was already so famous and so popular, that it was already regarded as of religious merit to read and to hear it, and that heaven was promised to him who copied it.³ The more one copied of so magnificent and so salutary a poem, "that imparts long life, health, renown, good * brothers and intelligence",⁴ the more certain one was of entering heaven. Therefore the first compilers and editors to handle the written poem, did not regard it as their task to view the transmitted material critically, to distinguish the genuine from the spurious, but, on the contrary, welcomed everything which presented itself under the title of 'Rāmāyaṇa'.

We can, however, only speak of a 'more or less' definite form of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for the manuscripts in which the epic has come down to us, differ greatly from one another, and there are at least *three different recensions* of the text, representing the transmission in different regions of India. These recensions differ from one another not only in reference to

¹ It was favourable for the amplifications, though unfavourable for the preservation of the genuine, that the śloka is a metre easy to handle. To produce any amount of ślokas almost in no time, is an easy matter for any tolerably educated Indian who knows Sanskrit.

² The activity of the *commentators*, by which the text was made still more secure, began much later still.

³ VI, 128, 120 : "Those men who, full of love towards Rāma, write down this collection (saṃhitā) compiled by the Rṣi, attain to a dwelling in Indra's heaven."

⁴ VI, 128, 122. Also see above, p. 420.

various readings of certain passages, but also in the fact that in each of them verses, long passages and even whole cantos occur, which are missing in others; also the order of the verses is very frequently different in the different recensions. The recension most widely spread (in the North as well as in the South of India), is the one which Jacobi designates as 'C', which has several times been printed in Bombay.¹ The only complete edition which has appeared in Europe, by G. Gorresio,² contains the *Bengal* recension. The text of the *North-Western Indian* (Western Indian, Kashmiri) recension is now being printed at Lahore.³ The only explanation for the great differences between the recensions is the fact that the text of the epic was for a long period only handed down by oral transmission. It is conceivable that the order of the verses became dislocated in the memory of the rhapsodists, that the wording must often have suffered considerable changes, and that the singers of different regions made different additions and extensions respectively.

All these recensions agree, however, in that they contain all the seven books, and that in all of them, spurious passages are side by side with genuine ones. For this reason none of the recensions represent an 'original text' of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the omission of a passage in one of the recensions is always a justifiable ground for suspecting its genuineness; and on the whole it is certainly easier to detect what is spurious and later in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, than it is in the *Mahābhārata*. "As on many of our old, venerable cathedrals", says Jacobi,⁴ "every coming generation has added something

¹ I quote from this recension in the edition of the NSP. by K. P. Parab, 2nd Ed., Bombay, 1902. It was a mistake to call this recension 'Northern Indian', for the Southern Indian MSS. give the same text; s. Winternitz, *Catalogue of South Indian Sanskrit Manuscripts*, London, 1902, p. 67; M. Winternitz and A. B. Keith, *Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS. in the Bodleian Library*, II, pp. 145 f.

² Turin, 1843-1867. See on this edition E. Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie* ('Grundriss' I, I B), pp. 145 f. Only the first two Books have been edited (with a Latin translation) by A. W. von Schlegel Bonnæ, 1829, 1838, on eclectic principles. An edition from a Bengali MS. with comparative foot-notes was published by Pandit Rasiklal Bhattāchārya in the *Pandit*, N. S., Vols. 28-34. A comparative study of the recensions C and B (Bengali) has been made by M. Vallauri, GSAI., 25, 1912, pp. 45 ff.

³ Critically edited by Pandit Ram Labhaya, published by the Research Department, D. A. V. College, Lahore, 1923 ff. Cf. Hans Wirtz, *Die westliche Recension des Rāmāyaṇa*. Diss. Bonn, 1894; S. Lévi, J.A., 1918, s. 11, t. xi, pp. 5 ff. Only when we shall have critical editions of all the three recensions, will it be possible to decide which of them contains the more authentic text.

⁴ *Das Rāmāyaṇa*, p. 60.

new and repaired something old, without the original construction being effaced, in spite of all the added little chapels and turrets ; so also many generations of singers have been at work at the *Rāmāyaṇa* ; but the old nucleus, around which so much has grown, is to the searching eye of the student, not difficult to recognise, if not in every detail, yet in its principal features." Jacobi himself, in his work *Das Rāmāyaṇa* has indisputably proved a large number of additions and extensions to be such. The fact that, in an attempt at a critical reconstruction of the text, perhaps only a quarter of the transmitted 24,000 verses of the *Rāmāyaṇa* would prove to be 'genuine', does not speak against the justification of the criticism.¹ It is only on account of the *great mass* of the 'spurious' in the Indian epics, that the reading of them, which often carries us away to the greatest admiration, still oftener disappoints us. And if a comparison between the Indian and the Greek epics with reference to artistic value must necessarily result unfavourably for the former, the blame rests far more with those versifiers who increased and disfigured the ancient songs with their own additions and alterations, than with the ancient Indian poets. The 'formless fermenting verbiage', with which Friedrich Rückert reproaches the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is surely more often to be placed to the account of the imitators of Vālmiki than to that of Vālmiki himself. But on the whole the German poet is probably right when he seeks the beauty of the Indian epic *elsewhere* than that of the Greek, saying :

"Such fantastic grimaces, such formless fermenting verbiage
As *Rāmāyaṇa* offers thee, that has Homer
Certainly taught thee to despise ; but yet such lofty thoughts
And such deep feeling the *Iliad* does not show thee."²

THE AGE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA³

Closely connected with the question of the genuine and the spurious in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the question of the age of

¹ In Vol. 51 of ZDMG. (1897), pp. 605 ff., Jacobi made an attempt to deal critically with a considerable connected portion of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in which, out of 600 verses, not quite a quarter remained.

² F. Rückert, *Poetisches Tagebuch*, Frankfurt a. M., 1888, p. 99.

³ Cf. Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 100 ff. ; A. B. Keith, JRAS., 1915, pp. 318 ff.

the poem. For in order to answer this question it is certainly of importance whether we can form some idea, at least, of the interval of time which may have elapsed between the original poem, whose genuine parts are to be found in *Books II-VI*, and the two added *Books I and VII*.

We have now seen that in the genuine books Rāma is merely a human hero, and that it is only in *Books I and VII* (and in a few interpolated passages of the other books) that he appears as the incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. It is the epic itself which has made Prince Rāma a national hero. This transformation of Rāma from a man into a semi-divine national hero and finally into the Universal God Viṣṇu must necessarily have taken a very long time. Moreover, the poet Vālmiki appears as a pious forest hermit and Ṛṣi and a contemporary of the hero Rāma in the first and last books of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thus Vālmiki had already become a legendary personage in the minds of the poets of these later books. All this makes it seem likely that centuries elapsed between the genuine and the spurious portions of the poem.¹

We should immediately add here, though, that also in our *Mahābhārata*, which knows not only the Rāma legend, but the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, Rāma is regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and Vālmiki is mentioned as an ancient Ṛṣi. It has already been mentioned above (p. 338) that the *Rāmopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata* is in all probability only a free abridged rendering of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and we may add, of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in a very late form, fairly nearly approaching the present one. For, to the author of the *Rāmopākhyāna* Rāma is already Viṣṇu become man,² he knows that Hanumat 'burned' Laṅkā—a passage proved to be spurious—,³ and he is already acquainted with that part of *Book VII* which refers to Rāvaṇa.⁴ The story of Rāma is related in the *Mahābhārata* in order to console Yudhiṣṭhira for the

¹ Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, p. 65.

² *Mahābhārata* III, 147, 31 ; 275, 5 ff.

³ *Mahābhārata* III, 148, 9. Cf. above p. 431 Note 1.

⁴ Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 73 f. Also in *Mahābhārata* VII, 59, and XII, 29, 51 ff., the Rāma legend is briefly touched on, and a few verses partly agreeing with *Rāmāyaṇa* VI, 128, 95 ff., refer to the paradisiacal condition of the subjects of Rāma 'who ruled for ten thousand and ten hundred years'.

stealing of Draupadī. But this whole episode of the stealing of Draupadī is surely only an imitation of the stealing of Sītā in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the latter, indeed, this abduction is the nucleus of the legend and of the poem, while in the *Mahābhārata* the abduction of Draupadī has practically no significance for the course of the narrative. Other striking coincidences in single features in the two epics have been pointed out, especially the resemblance between the heroes Arjuna and Rāma. The banishment into the forest for twelve to fourteen years, the bending of the bow, and endowment of the heroes with divine weapons which they fetch from the gods¹—these are points in which the influence of the one epic upon the other is *possible*, but can hardly be proved. Nevertheless it is more likely that the *Mahābhārata* borrowed motives from the *Rāmāyaṇa* than the reverse. For while the *Rāmāyaṇa* shows no kind of acquaintance with the Pāṇḍava legend or the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*,² the *Mahābhārata*, as we have seen, knows not only the Rāma legend, but the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself. In the *Harivaṃśa* there is even already a mention of a dramatic representation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (see above, p. 396 Note). It is still more important, however, that the *Mahābhārata* (VII, 143, 66) quotes a ‘śloka once sung by Vālmiki’, which is actually to be found in our *Rāmāyaṇa*, (VI, 81, 28). Vālmiki is mentioned in several places in the *Mahābhārata* as a ‘great ascetic’ and venerable Ṛṣi, by the side of Vasiṣṭha and other Ṛṣis of ancient-times.³ On one occasion he tells Yudhiṣṭhira that, in the course of a disputation with holy Munis he was once reproached with being a ‘Brahman-murderer’, and that through this reproach the guilt of Brahman-murder had come upon him, from which he could only cleanse himself by the worship of Śiva.⁴

¹ Cf. A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata* IV, 68 f. E. Windisch, LZB., 1879, No. 52, col. 1709.

² It is true that the poet of the *Rāmāyaṇa* knew the poem of Sāvitrī and the song of Nala (*Rāmāyaṇa* II, 30, 6; V. 24, 12), but it is not certain that he knew them as parts of the *Mahābhārata* (as is assumed by Hopkins, *Great Epic*, p. 78 note).

³ *Mahābhārata* I, 2, 18; 11, 7, 16; V, 83, 27; XII, 207, 4; *Harivaṃśa*, 268, 14539.

⁴ *Mahābhārata* XIII, 18, 8. According to the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*, Vālmiki lived among robbers when he was a young man, though he was a Brahman by birth. The same tradition is to be found in the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa*. Cf. Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, p. 66 note;

All these facts justify our agreeing with Jacobi (*loc. cit.*, p. 71) when he says that the *Rāmāyaṇa* must already "have been generally familiar as an *ancient* work, before the *Mahābhārata* had reached its final form." It is quite in accord with this that the 'process of degeneration', if one may say so, *i.e.*, the superseding of the genuine by the spurious, and the penetrating of later elements into the old parts has gone so far in the *Mahābhārata* as to pervade the whole work, while in the *Rāmāyaṇa* it was checked in the beginning and extends only to *Books I and VII* and a few parts of the remaining books.

But if the *Mahābhārata* already had, on the whole, its present form in the fourth century A.D. (see above, p. 408), then the *Rāmāyaṇa* must have received its 'final' form (the word 'final' is to be taken *cum grano salis*) at least one or two centuries earlier.

However, this does not by any means answer the question as to which is the older of the two epics. After all that we have said about the history of the *Mahābhārata* as well as of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is clear enough that this question in itself has no sense at all, but naturally resolves itself into three different questions, namely : I. Which of the two works, *in the form in which they are now before us*, is the older ? II. What relation does the period of time in which an original *Mahābhārata* epic gradually became the great *compilation* combining heroic songs and didactic poetry, bear to that period of time in which *the ancient poem of Vālmīki* became enlarged into the *present Rāmāyaṇa* by means of greater or smaller additions in the older books, and finally by the addition of *Books I and VII* ? III. Was there, generally speaking, a *Mahābhārata* epic or a *Rāmāyaṇa* epic first in existence ?

Only to the first of these three questions a definite answer could be given, namely that our present *Rāmāyaṇa* is older than the *Mahābhārata* in its present form. As regards the second question, we may assume that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, being so

D. Ibbetson and A. K. Mojumdar in *Ind. Ant.*, 24, 1895, p. 220 ; 31, 1902, p. 351 ; D. Ch. Sen, *Bengali Rāmāyaṇas*, p. 125 (a similar Mohammedan legend, pp. 127 f.). Bālmikī, *i.e.*, Vālmīki, is worshipped as a kind of saint by the caste of the scavengers in Eastern Punjab, s. R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Punjab*, 1 (1884), pp. 529 f.

much shorter, required a shorter time for its gradual growth than the *Mahābhārata*. It has already been pointed out that the character of the two spurious books of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is strikingly similar to that of the *Mahābhārata*, and that the same brahmanical myths and legends often recur in both. The stories which are common to both works are, however, told with such variations that we are compelled to assume that they are derived from the same source, the Itihāsa literature orally transmitted in brahmanical circles, rather than that borrowing took place. Furthermore, all the books of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and of the *Mahābhārata* have numerous phrases, hemistiches, proverbial idioms and whole verses in common,¹ and in language, style and metre there is a far-reaching conformity in the two works.² From these facts we conclude that the period of the growth of the *Rāmāyaṇa* falls within the longer period of the development of the *Mahābhārata*.

The third and most important question, which of the two *original* epics is the earlier, can only be answered by way of hypothesis. The Hindus declare the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be earlier than the *Mahābhārata*, because, according to the traditional list of Viṣṇu's incarnations, the incarnation as Rāma preceded that as Kṛṣṇa.³ This argument has no force, because in the old, genuine *Rāmāyaṇa*, as we have seen, Rāma does not as yet appear as an incarnation at all. It is a fact, however, that allusions to Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa), Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira already occur in Pāṇini's grammar, whereas Rāma is not mentioned either by Pāṇini or Patañjali, nor in inscriptions of the pre-Christian era.⁴ It is likely, too, that the theory of incarnation arose out of the Kṛṣṇa cult, and that the transformation of the hero Rāma into an incarnation of Viṣṇu resulted only later, by analogy to the Kṛṣṇa

¹ This has been proved especially by E. W. Hopkins in the *American Journal of Philology*, Vols. XIX, pp. 138 ff. and XX, pp. 22 ff., and in his book, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 58 ff., 403 ff.

² On the Śloka in the two epics s. Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 24 ff., and *Gurupñjākaumudī*, pp. 50 ff.

³ According to the Purāṇas. Rāma appears in the Kṛtayuga, but Kṛṣṇa not until the Dvāparayuga. Cf. A. Gobindācārya Svāmīn in JBRAS., 23, 1911-12, pp. 244 ff.

⁴ Cf. R. G. Bhandarkar, *Early History of the Deccan*, 2nd Ed., Bombay, 1895, p. 10; *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., pp. 46 f.

incarnation.¹ A few scholars² have declared the *Rāmāyaṇa* to be the earlier of the two epics, because the *burning of widows* does not occur in it, whilst it is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. The fact of the matter, however, is that in the old, genuine *Mahābhārata* the burning of widows is just as much absent as in the genuine *Rāmāyaṇa*, whilst there are allusions to it in the later portions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though less frequent than in the *Mahābhārata*.³ Jacobi (*loc. cit.*, pp. 78, 81 ff.) is so sure about the *Rāmāyaṇa* being the older poem, that he even takes for granted that the *Mahābhārata* only became an epic under the influence of the poetic art of Vālmiki. This seems to me to go far beyond what is warranted by facts, indeed it seems to be in contradiction with some facts. In more than one respect the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as compared with the *Mahābhārata*, indicates progress in the art of epic poetry. In the *Mahābhārata* we still have a distinct remnant of the ancient ballad form in the *prose formulae* such as 'Yudhiṣṭhira spake', 'Kuntī spake', 'Duryodhana spake', and so on, introducing the speeches of the various characters, while in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the speakers throughout are introduced in verses.⁴ It has also already been pointed out to how great an extent the *Rāmāyaṇa* already shows the peculiarities of the style of ornate court poetry, the *kāvya*.⁵ Of course it is hard to say which of it is old, and which parts have been added later. Nevertheless, this peculiarity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which separates it considerably from the *Mahābhārata* and brings it nearer to the epics of Kālidāsa, must make us chary of assuming a greater antiquity for the *Rāmāyaṇa*.⁶

¹ Jacobi in ERE., VII, 104 f. R. Chanda, *The Indo-Aryan Races*, I, 1916, pp. 88 f., 111 ff.

² Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 107 f., and before him A. W. v. Schlegel and Monier Williams, also J. Jolly, *Recht und Sitte*, p. 68.

³ Cf. Winternitz, *Die Frau in den indischen Religionen*, I, 1920, pp. 58 f.; J. J. Meyer, *Das Weib im altindischen Epos*, pp. 307 f.

⁴ See above, p. 284. The Purāṇas have always retained these prose formulas in order to preserve the appearance of antiquity.

⁵ See above, pp. 417 f., 429 note 1, 430 and cf. p. 405.

⁶ E. W. Hopkins (*Cambridge History*, I, p. 251) says of the *Rāmāyaṇa* "Whatever may have been the date of its germ as a story, as an art-product it is later than the *Mahābhārata*." Cf. also Oldenberg, *Das Mahābhārata*, pp. 53 ff., and H. Raychaudhury in *Calcutta Review*, Mar. 1922, pp. 1 ff.

There is a second point, too, in which the *Mahābhārata* makes a much more archaic impression than the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Throughout the *Mahābhārata*—at least in the nucleus of the poem, which treats of the Pāṇḍava story and the Kuru battle—we encounter rougher manners and a more warlike spirit than in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The battle scenes of the *Mahābhārata* read quite differently from those described in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Those in the *Mahābhārata* give the impression that the poet belonged to a rough race of warriors, and had himself seen bloody battle-fields, while those in the *Rāmāyaṇa* sound rather as though a story-teller is relating battles of which his only source of information is the reports he has heard. There is not that embittered hatred, that fierce resentment between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit, as in the *Mahābhārata* when we read of the battles between Arjuna and Karṇa or Bhīma and Duryodhana. The Sītā of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, when she is stolen, abducted and persecuted by Rāvaṇa, or when she is rejected by Rāma, always maintains a certain calmness and meekness in her accusations and lamentations, and in her speeches there is not a trace of the wild passion which we so often find in Draupadī in the *Mahābhārata*. Kuntī and Gāndhārī, too, are true hero-mothers of a warlike race, while Kausalyā and Kaikeyī in the *Rāmāyaṇa* can rather be compared with the stereotyped queens of the classical dramas. This seems to indicate that the *Mahābhārata* belongs to a ruder, more warlike age, while the *Rāmāyaṇa* shows traces of a more refined civilization; unless, in order to explain this sharply marked difference between the two epics, we assume that the *Mahābhārata* reflects a rougher civilization of *Western* India, while the *Rāmāyaṇa* reflects a more refined civilization of *Eastern* India, and that the two epics do not represent the poetry of different *periods*, but of different *regions* of India. Even from this point of view, however, it is difficult to conceive that the *Mahābhārata* should only have become an epic under the influence of Vālmiki's poetic art.

There can be no doubt that the *Mahābhārata* belongs to the West of India, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the East. Western

peoples play the principal part in the *Mahābhārata*, while the chief events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* take place in the land of the Kosala, where, according to tradition, Vālmiki is said to have lived, and where, in all probability, he did really live.¹ But in *Eastern India Buddhism* originated, and in Magadha, as in the neighbouring Kosala land, it was first propagated. So much the more important is the question: What is the relationship of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to Buddhism?

It has already been pointed out above (p. 414) that, in the oldest Buddhist literature, we still find examples of the *Ākhyāna* or ballad poetry, in which we have recognised a fore-runner of the epic. T. W. Rhys Davids² has concluded from this that the *Rāmāyaṇa* could not have yet existed as an epic at the time of the origin of these Buddha-ballads. Now it could be objected that perhaps the ancient *Ākhyāna* or ballad poetry might have lived on beside the new literary form of the epic which had developed out of it, in the same way as we find ballad and epic poetry side by side in modern literatures. It is remarkable, notwithstanding, that we find nothing but Buddha-ballads throughout early Buddhist literature, whilst a Buddha epic was not written until centuries later. It is still more important that in the *Tipiṭaka* we find the *Daśaratha-Jātaka*,³ which relates how Bharata brings the news of the death of Daśaratha, whereupon Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā to step into the water to offer the libations for the departed. This gives rise to a conversation, in which Bharata asks Rāma how it is that he shows no sign of sorrow,⁴ and Rāma replies with a lengthy speech of consolation, explaining how futile it is to lament over the

¹ Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 66 ff., 69.

² *Buddhist India*, London, 1903, p. 183.

³ The Pāli text of this *Jātaka* (No. 461) was first published with an English translation by V. Fausbøll, Copenhagen, 1871. It has been treated in detail by Weber, *loc. cit.*, 1 ff.; Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, 84 ff. E. Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, 2nd Ed., Paris, 1882, pp. 317 f.; Lüders, NGGW., 1897, 1, pp. 40 ff.; D. Ch. Sen, *The Bengali Rāmāyaṇas*, pp. 9 ff.; G. A. Grierson, JRAS., 1922, 135 ff.; N. B. Utgikar in Centenary Supplement to JRAS., 1924, pp. 203 ff. Only the gāthās of the *Jātaka* belong to the *Tipiṭaka*. The prose narrative is the fabrication of the compilers of the commentary (about the fifth century A.D.), and all conclusions drawn from this story, such as those of D. Ch. Sen and others, are faulty.

⁴ Here we see that even the *Jātaka-gāthās* were remodelled with a Buddhist tendency. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma himself laments exceedingly at the news of his father's death, before making the speech of consolation, s. *Rāmāyaṇa* II, 102-105, and the same thing probably holds good for the ancient ballad too.

dead, as death comes to all mortals. The fact that only *one* of the twelve ancient gāthās of the Jātaka appears in our *Rāmāyaṇa*¹ proves that our epic cannot be the source of these verses, but that the Jātaka is based upon an ancient Rāma ballad. In the same Jātaka book there is also the Sāma-Jātaka,² which we may probably consider as an older form of the tale about the hermit-boy killed in the chase, which is told by Daśaratha in *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 63 f. There are a few other Jātakas, too, in which we find passages reminding us of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but only very seldom literal agreement.³ It is striking, too, that in the whole of the Jātaka, which tells so many tales of demons and fabulous animals, we hear not a word of the Rākṣasa Rāvaṇa or of Hanumat and the monkeys. All this makes it seem likely that, at the time when the Tipiṭaka came into being (in the fourth and third centuries B.C.) there were ballads dealing with Rāma, perhaps a cycle of such ballads, but no Rāma epic as yet.⁴

Another question is whether traces of Buddhism can be proved in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It can probably be answered with an absolute negative; for the only place in which the Buddha is mentioned (see above, p. 427, Note 1) is decidedly spurious. However, there may be one, though very distant, relation to Buddhism. Weber had still believed that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was based on an "ancient Buddhist legend of the pious prince Rāma, in whom the legend glorified the ideal of Buddhist equanimity."⁵ That is surely not the case. Nevertheless, the

¹ Parallels to other verses in Rāma's speech of consolation (*Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 105, 21 : 22) have been traced by Lüders (ZDMG., 58, 1904, 713 f.) in Jātaka 328, gā. 2-4. In the commentary on the *Daśaratha-Jātaka* there is also a verse about the ten thousand years' reign of Rāma, which corresponds to *Rāmāyaṇa*, VI, 128 : 104. An allusion to the Rāma legend also occurs in Jātaka 513, gā. 17.

² Jātaka 540, also in *Mahāvastu*, II, 209 ff. Cf. Charpentier, WZKM., 24, 1910, 397 ; 27, 1913, 94. Oldenberg, NGGW., 1918, 456 ff. ; D. Ch. Sen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 15 ff.

³ There are a few scenes and situations in the Vessantara-Jātaka which remind us of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but there is not a single case of literal agreement between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Jātaka-gāthās. In Jātaka 519, however, there is a stanza in which a demon tries to persuade faithful Sambulā to desert her sick husband and to follow him, uttering the same threat as is used by Rāvaṇa to Sītā in *Rāmāyaṇa*, V. 22, 9, namely, that if she is not willing, he will devour her for his breakfast. Cf. D. Ch. Sen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 18 ff. The Jātaka-gāthās, too, contain earlier and later portions, and some parts may be later than the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

⁴ Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 183.

⁵ *Über das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 6 f.

idea of explaining the exceeding mildness, gentleness and tranquillity which are ascribed to Rāma, by Buddhistic under-currents, should perhaps not be rejected. At the least, it is conceivable that, in a land strongly influenced by Buddhism, an epic was composed by a non-Buddhist, the hero of which, in spite of all his splendid demon-battles, is more a sage after the heart of the Buddha, than a hero of war. It appears, then, that the authors of the ancient Buddhist texts in the fourth and third centuries B.C. had as yet no knowledge of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but that they knew ballads utilised by Valmiki for his Rāma epic, and that on the other hand the *Rāmāyaṇa* was influenced at least indirectly by Buddhism. From this we may probably argue that the *Rāmāyaṇa* came into being at a time when Buddhism had already spread in Eastern India and the Buddhist Canon was in course of formation.

This is in harmony with the circumstance that the *metre* (the śloka) of the *Rāmāyaṇa* appears to represent a later stage of development than that of the Buddhist Pāli poetry, and that it approximates more nearly to the metre of the later portions of the *Mahābhārata*.¹

H. Jacobi thought it possible to assume a pre-Buddhist time of origin of the epic on *linguistic* grounds. This epic language is a popular *Sanskrit*. About 260 B.C., for his inscriptions addressed to his people, King Aśoka used, not Sanskrit, but dialects similar to Pāli. Buddha, too, as early as the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. preached, not in Sanskrit, but in the popular language. But popular epics, so he said,² cannot be composed in an already 'extinct' language, but must be composed in the living language of the people. Now, as in Aśoka's time and even already in Buddha's time, Sanskrit was no longer the language of the people, the popular epics (in their original form) must belong to an older pre-Buddhist period when Sanskrit was still a living

¹ Cf. H. Oldenberg in *Gurupñjākaumudī*, pp. 9 ff., and E. Hopkins, *Great Epic*, pp. 236 ff. Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, p. 93, and Keith, *JRAS.*, 1915, pp. 321, 324 ff., contest the soundness of this argument.

² Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 116 ff.

language. Against this, it may be urged that Sanskrit has always 'lived' in India as a *literary language*, side by side with the popular languages, and has also been understood in extensive circles in which it was not spoken. There is nothing strange in the fact that, at the same time as Buddhist and Jain monks composed and preached in popular dialects, Sanskrit epics also were composed and listened to. Down to the present day in India it is not at all unusual for two or more languages to be current side by side in the same district. And in a great part of Northern India there is current, even to day, (besides Sanskrit) a *modern Indian literary language*, which differs strongly from the colloquial language.¹ Therefore, if we here and there encounter the same verses which we find in the *Rāmāyaṇa* or in the *Mahābhārata*, in Pāli or in Prākṛit, in Buddhist or in Jinistic texts, it does not always follow that the Sanskrit verses must have been translated from the popular languages. Still less justification is there for the view of some prominent scholars that the epics as a whole were originally composed in popular dialects and only translated into Sanskrit later. It is highly improbable that such a translation could have occurred without any record of it having been kept anywhere. Jacobi² has convincingly shown how unacceptable this hypothesis is on other grounds also. But when he here, in opposition to the view that "a popular epic must be recited in the language of the people", recalls the fact "that the songs of the Iliad and the Odyssey also were presented in the Homeric language, although the language of the audience differed considerably from it", and when he emphasizes the fact that the conception 'nation' could never, in India, have the meaning, which we connect with the word, he refutes his own view that the *Rāmāyaṇa* must have been composed when Sanskrit was still the 'popular language', and that it must therefore be pre-Buddhist.³

¹ Cf. above p. 37 note, and Grierson in JRAS., 1906, pp. 441 f.

² ZDMG., 48, 1894, pp. 407 ff. The view that the epics were originally composed in Prākṛit was first expressed by A. Barth (*Revue Critique*, 5 avril, 1886) and later defended by him in detail (RHR., t. 27, 1893, pp. 288 ff.; t. 45, 1902, pp. 195 f.: 'Oeuvres' II, 152 ff., 397 f.) Cf. also Grierson, *Ind. Ant.*, 23, 1894, p. 55.

³ The question as to whether Sanskrit was a living language at the time when the epics were composed, has been much discussed. It is a fact that all our ancient inscriptions (beginning approximately about 300 B.C.) are written in popular dialects,

During the first centuries of the Christian era, Sanskrit was used by the Buddhists also. The *Buddhacarita* of the great Buddhist poet *Aśvaghoṣa* is an ornate epic (*kāvya*) in Sanskrit, for which the poetry of Valmiki certainly served as a model.¹ On the other hand we find, in a spurious portion of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a scene² which is most probably an imitation of a scene of the *Buddhacarita*. Now, as *Aśvaghoṣa* is a contemporary of *Kaṇiṣkā*, we may conclude that at the beginning of the second century A.D.,³ the *Rāmāyaṇa* was already regarded as a model epic, but that it had not yet received its final form to such an extent as to exclude further interpolations. Towards the end of the second century, however, it must have already had its final form, as follows from what has been said above concerning the relationship of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the *Mahābhārata*.

A public recitation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is already mentioned in Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*,⁴ which was probably written towards the close of the second century A.D. In Chinese translations of Buddhist tales, which are said to date

and that it is only inscriptions of the Christian era which are also written in Sanskrit (cf. R. O. Franke *Pali und Sanskrit*, Strassburg, 1902, and T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 148 ff.). However, the inscriptions only prove that, in those pre-Christian centuries, Sanskrit was not as yet used as the *language of the royal offices*: they prove nothing against its use as a *literary language*. R. G. Bhandarkar (JBRAS., 16, 1885, 268 ff., 327 ff.) has already shown that, at the time of the grammarians Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, Sanskrit was by no means a 'dead' language. See also E. J. Rapson and F. W. Thomas, JRAS., 1904, pp. 435 ff., 460 ff., 747 ff. The objections of Rhys Davids, Grierson, and Fleet (*ib.*, pp. 457 ff., 471 ff., 481 ff.) prove nothing against the assumption that, at the time when the epics came into being, Sanskrit was a literary language understood in wide circles and spoken to some extent. Cf. also Keith and Grierson, JRAS., 1906, pp. 1 ff., 441 f.; 1915, 318 f.; and Windisch in OC., XIV, Paris, 1, 257, 266. The fact that in the drama the *sūtas* speak only Sanskrit, also tends to show that the *sūta* poetry, *i.e.*, the epic, was composed in Sanskrit. On archaisms in the language of the *Rāmāyaṇa* s. T. Michelson, JAOS., 25, 1904, 89 ff. and *Transactions and Proceed.*, American Philol. Assoc. 34, pp. xl f.; M. A. Roussel, J.A., 1910, s. 10, t. xv, pp. 1 ff.; Keith, JRAS., 1910, pp. 1321 ff.

¹ Cf. A. Gawronski, *Studies about the Sanskrit Buddhist Literature*, w. Krakowie, 1919 ('Prace Komiji Orj. Pol. Akad. Um.' No. 2), pp. 27 ff.

² The scraglio scene, above p. 431, note 3.

³ Much as has been written about the period of *Kaṇiṣka*, it is not yet definitely settled. However, there is ever-increasing evidence for the theory that he reigned during the first half of the second century A.D. Cf. Smith, *Early History*, pp. 271 ff., 276n.

⁴ Translated from the Chinese as '*Aśvaghoṣa's Sūtrālaṃkāra*' by Ed. Huber, Paris, 1908, p. 126.

back to the third century A.D., the Rāma legend is related in a form prepared to suit Buddhist purposes.¹ We glean from Chinese sources, too, that, at the time of the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu (fourth century A.D.) the *Rāmāyaṇa* was a well-known and popular poem also among the Buddhists in India.² As early as in the second half of the first century A.D. the Jain monk Vimāla Sūri recast the Rāma legend in his Prakrit poem *Paūmacariya* (Padmacarita), bringing it into line with the religion and philosophy of the Jains.³ It was obviously his intention to offer his co-religionists a substitute for the poem of Vālmiki which was already famous at that time. In about 600 A.D. the *Rāmāyaṇa* was already famous in far-off Cambodia as a sacred book of Hinduism, for an inscription reports that a certain Somaśarma presented 'the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Purāṇa*, and the complete *Bhārata*' to a temple.⁴

The circumstance that the *ancient* poem already served as a model for Aśvaghoṣa, and hence must have been composed long before the time of the latter, agrees well with the entire absence, in the old and genuine *Rāmāyaṇa*, of any traces of *Greek* influence or of an acquaintance with the Greeks. For two allusions to the *Yavanas* (Ionians, Greeks) have been proved to be spurious. And it is quite out of the

¹ Cf. S. Lévi in *Album Kern*, pp. 279 ff.; Ed. Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes*, III, pp. 2 f.; Ed. Huber in BEFEO., 4, 1904, 698 ff.

² See K. Watanabe, JRAS., 1907, pp. 99 ff.

³ According to the concluding verses belonging to the poem itself it was written in the year 530 after Mahāvīra (i.e., about 62 A.D.). E. Leumann (to whom I am indebted for valuable information about the *Paūmacariya*) considers this date as unassailable. H. Jacobi (ERE., VII, p. 467) assumes that it was written in the third century A.D. The later Jain recensions of the Rāma legend (in the 68th Parvan of Guṇāḍhya's *Uttarapurāṇa* and in the 7th Parvan of Hemachandra's *Śaṭṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*) are based on the *Paūmacariya*. On Hemachandra's *Jain Rāmāyaṇa* s. D. Ch. Sen, *Bengali Rāmāyaṇas*, pp. 26 ff. (The *Jain Rāmāyaṇa* influenced the Bengali versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as is shown by D. Ch. Sen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 204 ff.). However, the appearance of Rāvaṇa as a great sage and ascetic, and of Sītā as Rāvaṇa's daughter in Buddhist and Jain versions of the poem of Rāma, should not be looked upon as traits pointing to ancient traditions, as is done by D. Ch. Sen. In the *Adbhutottarakhaṇḍa*, too, Sītā appears as the daughter of Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's queen. This, however, is a late appendix to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, written in praise of Sītā as Śakti, and is popular among the Śāktas in Kashmir. Cf. Weber, HSS., Verz. I, pp. 123 f., Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.* VI, p. 1183; D. Ch. Sen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 35, 59, 227 f.; Grierson, JRAS., 1921, pp. 422 ff.

⁴ See A. Barth, *Inscriptions Sanscrites du Cambodge* ('Notices et extraits des MSS. de la bibliothèque nationale,' t. xxvii, 1, Paris, 1885), pp. 29 ff. On the Old Javanic *Rāmāyaṇa* s. R. Friederich, JRAS., 1876, pp. 172 ff. and H. Kern, *Verspreide Geschriften*, Vol. 9, pp. 251 ff., 297.



question that, as was once suggested by Weber, the Homeric poems should have had any sort of influence on Vālmiki's composition. There is not even a remote similarity between the stealing of Sitā and the rape of Helen, between the advance on Lañka and that on Troy, and only a very remote similarity of motive between the bending of the bow by Rāma and that by Ulysses.¹

As an epic the *Rāmāyaṇa* is very far removed from the *Veda*, and even the Rāma legend is only bound to Vedic literature by very slender threads. Whether that King Janaka of Videha who is frequently mentioned in the Upaniṣads² is the same as the father of Sitā, must remain an open question. Weber³ has pointed out a few slight connections between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Yajurveda*. Sitā, the heroine of the epic, probably belongs to the oldest elements of the Rāma legend. Her name signifies 'field furrow', she came forth out of the earth, and Mother Earth receives her again. Although the latter feature of the legend only occurs in the late *Book VII*, it may be very old. The idea of a goddess of agriculture, Sitā, who is already invoked in a blessing on the land, in the *R̥gveda* (IV, 57, 6) is extremely ancient, and certainly reaches back far into the Vedic period. The Gṛhyasūtras have preserved for us prayer-formulas, in which she is personified in an extremely life-like manner—'lotus-crowned, radiant in every limb.....black-eyed', and so on.⁴ Yet Weber⁵ is probably right when he remarks that this Vedic idea of Sitā as the goddess Field-furrow is "separated by a wide gulf from the representation of her in the Rāma legend." Neither is there anything to indicate that songs of Rāma and Sitā already existed in

¹ See Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 94 ff.

² Rāma does not appear in the old Upaniṣads. The *Rāmaphrvaṭāpanīya-Upaniṣad* and the *Ramottaratāpanīya-Upaniṣad* (The *Vaiṣṇava-Upaniṣads*.....ed. by Mahadeva Sastri, Adyar, 1923, pp. 305 ff., 326 ff.; Deussen, *Sechzig Upanishads*, pp. 802 ff., 818 ff.) are very late fabrications, which are 'Upaniṣads' only in name; and in them Rāma is honoured as an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu.

³ *Über Das Rāmāyaṇa*, pp. 8. f.

⁴ Kauśikasūtra 106. See A. Weber, *Omina und Portenta* (ABA., 1858, pp. 368 ff.). *Episches im vedischen Ritual* (SBA., 1891, p. 818).

Vedic times.¹ Even if, with Jacobi, we were inclined to find in the legend of the battle of Rāma with Rāvaṇa, another form of the ancient myth of the battle of Indra with Vṛtra,² the "wide gulf", which separates the Veda from the epic, would still remain.

If we briefly summarise the results of our investigations into the age of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we can say the following :—

1. The later parts of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially *Books I* and *VII*, are separated from the genuine *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Books II* to *VI* by a long interval of time.

2. The whole *Rāmāyaṇa*, including the later portions, was already an old and famous work when the *Mahābhārata* had not yet attained its present form.

3. *It is probable* that the *Rāmāyaṇa* had *its present extent and contents* as early as *towards the close of the second century A.D.*

4. The older nucleus of the *Mahābhārata*, however, is probably older than the ancient *Rāmāyaṇa*.

5. In the Veda we find no trace of the Rāma epic and only very faint traces of the Rāma legend.

6. The ancient Buddhist texts of the *Tipiṭaka* betray no knowledge of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but contain traces of ballads in which the Rāma legend was sung.

7. There are no obvious traces of Buddhism to be seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but the characterisation of Rāma may possibly be traceable to remote Buddhist influence.

8. There can be no question of Greek influence in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the genuine *Rāmāyaṇa* betrays no acquaintance with the Greeks.

9. *It is probable* that *the original Rāmāyaṇa* was composed *in the third century B. C.* by Vālmiki on the basis of ancient ballads.

¹ I am unable to follow the fantastic expositions of Julius v. Negelein, who thinks he is able to discover in the Veda the 'outline of the Rāma-Sītā legend' (WZKM., 16, 1902, pp. 226 ff.).

² Jacobi, *loc. cit.*, p. 131.

THE PURĀṆAS AND THEIR POSITION IN INDIAN LITERATURE¹

It is difficult to determine the exact position of the Purāṇas in the history of Indian literature, both according to contents and chronologically. Actually they belong to the *religious* literature, and are, for the later Indian religion, which is generally called '*Hinduism*',² and which culminates in the worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva, approximately what the Veda is for the oldest religion or Brahmanism. On the other hand, how closely the Purāṇas are connected with the *epic* compositions can already be deduced sufficiently from the fact that in the preceding chapters we repeatedly had to speak of them. Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* for the greater part and the *Harivaṃśa* almost entirely, are nothing other than Purāṇas, and even the later books and sections of the *Rāmāyaṇa* partake of the character of Purāṇas. Furthermore, the Purāṇas undoubtedly reach back to great antiquity and are rooted in Vedic literature; many a legend, already familiar from Ṛgvedic hymns and from the Brāhmaṇas, reappears in the Purāṇas;³ but, just as undoubtedly, those works which have come down to us under the title of 'Purāṇa' are of a

¹ The first to make a thorough study of the Purāṇas was H. H. Wilson, in his *Essays on Sanskrit Literature* which first appeared in 1832 ff. and in the Introduction and Notes to his translation of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (s. Works by the late H. H. Wilson, ed. by R. Rost and Fitzedward Hall, Vol. III, pp. 1-155, and Vol. VI, Preface). He had a predecessor in Vans Kennedy, *Researches into the Nature and Affinity of Ancient and Hindu Mythology*, London, 1831. Valuable services have also been rendered to the investigation of the Purāṇa literature by Eugène Burnouf (Preface to his edition and translation of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*) and by the compilers of the great catalogues of manuscripts, especially Th. Aufrecht (*Bodl. Cat.*, pp. 7 ff.) and Julius Eggeling (*Ind. Off. Cat.*, Part VI, London, 1899). For Wilson's services in the investigation of the Purāṇas, cf. Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie*, pp. 41 ff. For more recent researches on the Purāṇas s. R. G. Bhandarkar; *A Peep into the Early History of India*, JBRAS., 20, 1900, 403 f., new ed. 1920, pp. 66 ff.; W. Jahn, *Festschrift Kuhn*, pp. 305 ff.; F. E. Pargiter, ERE., X. 1918, 448 ff.; *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, pp. 15 ff. and *passim*; J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, London, 1920, pp. 136 ff.; E. J. Rapson, *Cambridge History*, I, pp. 296 ff.

² On this religion cf. A. Barth, *Religions of India*, 2nd ed., London, 1889, pp. 153 ff.; M. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, London, 1891; E. W. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, Boston, 1895, pp. 434 ff.; Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, London, 1921, Vol. II; H. v. Glasenapp, *Der Hinduismus*, Munich, 1922.

³ Instances are the myths of Purūravas and Urvaśī (cf. T. Michelson, JAOS., 29, 284 f.), of Saranyū (s. A. Plan, ZDMG., 62. 1908, pp. 337 ff.), of Mudgala (s. Pargiter, JRAS., 1910, pp. 1328 ff.), of Vṛṣākapi (s. Pargiter, JRAS., 1911, 803 ff.).

later date, and up to the present day books are fabricated which assume the proud title 'Purāṇa', or claim to be parts of ancient Purāṇas. What has been said in the Introduction (see above, p. 26) about 'new wine in old bottles', applies especially to these works. Even the latest productions of this literature have the external form and the archaic frame of the oldest Purāṇas.

The word 'purāṇa' means originally nothing but *purāṇam ākhyānam*, i.e., 'old narrative'.¹ In the older literature, in Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads and old Buddhist texts, we generally find the word in connection with *itihāsa*. But it has already been remarked (see above, p. 274) that the 'Itihāsas and Purāṇas' or 'Itihāsapurāṇa' so often mentioned in olden times, do not mean actual books, still less, then, the epics or Purāṇas which have come down to us. On the other hand, definite works may have been thought of, when, in the *Atharvaveda*,² beside the four Vedas, 'the Purāṇa' also is enumerated. Only in the Sūtra literature is the existence of *real Purāṇas* definitely proved, i.e., of works whose contents approximately agreed with our present Purāṇa texts. In the *Gautama-Dharmasūtra*,³ which is regarded as the oldest of the preserved law-books, it is taught that the king is to take as his authorities on the administration of justice, the Veda, the law-books, the Vedāṅgas, and 'the Purāṇa'. The expression 'the Purāṇa' can here, like 'the Veda' only denote a species of literature. It is still more important that another law-book, the *Āpastambīya-Dharmasūtra*, contains not only two quotations from 'the Purāṇa', but also a third quotation from a *Bhaviṣyat-Purāṇa*. The latter quotation, it is true,

¹ The *Kauṭilya-Arthaśāstra* I, 5 (p. 10) in its definition of *itihāsa*, enumerates *purāṇa* and *itivṛtta* as belonging to the content of *itihāsa*. As *itivṛtta* can only mean a 'historical event', *purāṇa* probably means 'mythological and legendary lore.'

² XI, 7, 24. In the verse *Ath. V.* 19, 9 the Ṛṣi Nārada is addressed in such a manner as to make one believe that the verse is taken out of a Purāṇa dialogue. Cf. M. Bloomfield, SBE., Vol. 42, p. 435.

³ XI, 19. Thus also in the law-books of Bṛhaspatī, which are many centuries later (SBE., Vol. 33, p. 280) and *Tājñavalkya*, I, 3. In still later law-books the Purāṇas are not only enumerated generally among the sources of law, but also quoted as such in innumerable instances. Cf. Jolly, *Recht und Sittes* ('Grundriss', II, 8) pp. 30 f. The lawyer Kullūka (Manu I, 1) quotes 'from the Mahābhārata' the verse: "The Purāṇa, Manu's law-book, the Veda with the Vedāṅgas and the science of therapeutics are four things that are established by authority; they cannot be refuted with reasons." I have not found the verse in our *Mahābhārata* editions.

is not to be found in the Purāṇa which has come down to us under that title, neither can the other two quotations be found literally in our Purāṇas. However, there certainly are similar passages in our texts.¹ As there are good grounds for assigning the abovementioned Dharmasūtras to the fifth or fourth century B.C., there must have been even at that early period works resembling our Purāṇas.² It is indeed likely enough that our Purāṇas are only recasts of older works of the same species, namely, of works of religious didactic contents, in which were collected ancient traditions of the Creation, the deeds of the gods, heroes, saints and ancient ancestors of the human race, the beginnings of the famous royal families, and so on.

Also the relationship of the *Mahābhārata* to the *Purāṇas*³ indicates that the latter reach back to great antiquity, and that Purāṇas certainly existed already long before the final redaction of the *Mahābhārata*. Our *Mahābhārata* not only calls itself a Purāṇa, but also begins exactly as the Purāṇa texts usually begin, Ugraśravas, the son of the Sūta Lomaharṣaṇa, appearing as narrator. This Ugraśravas is called 'versed in the Purāṇas,' and Śaunaka, when inviting him to narrate, says to him: "Thy father once learned the whole Purāṇa;.....in the Purāṇa are told the stories of gods and the genealogies of the sages, and we heard them once long ago from thy father." Very frequently legends in the *Mahābhārata* are introduced with the words 'it is heard in the Purāṇa'; gāthās and ślokas, especially genealogical verses, 'sung by those versed in the Purāṇas', are quoted; an account of the Creation, composed

¹ Cf. G. Bühler, *Ind. Ant.*, 25, 1896, pp. 323 ff. and SBE., Vol. 2, 2nd ed., 1897, pp. xxix ff., and Pargiter, *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, pp. 43 ff.

² It does not, however, follow from these quotations that the Purāṇas contained separate sections on *dharma* at that time, as is the case with our present Purāṇas; we need only assume that, in connection with the 'ancient lore' they also handed down all kinds of ancient legal principles and maxims. Cf. Pargiter, *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, pp. 48 f. The *Kauṭilya-Arthaśāstra* recommends that misguided princes be instructed by means of Purāṇas (V, 6, p. 257), and counts Paurāṇikas, i.e., 'Purāṇa specialists', among the court officials (V, 3, p. 247). However, I cannot agree with Pargiter (*loc. cit.*, pp. 54 f.) in regarding this as a proof of the existence of definite Purāṇas in the fourth century B.C., as I consider the *Kauṭilya* as a work of the 3rd or 4th century A.D.

³ Cf. A. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, IV, pp. 29 ff. and E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 47 ff.

in prose (*Mahābh.* XII, 342) is called 'a Purāṇa', the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya is taught 'in the Purāṇa', and those versed in the Purāṇas recommend it ; 'in remembrance of the Purāṇa proclaimed by Vāyu',¹ the past and future ages of the world are described, and the *Harivaṃśa* not only quotes a *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, but in many places agrees literally with the *Vāyu-Purāṇa* transmitted to us. Numerous myths, legends, and didactic passages are common to the Purāṇas and the epics. Lüders² has proved that the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga legend has an older form in the *Padma-Purāṇa* than in our *Mahābhārata*. In a verse of the *Mahābhārata*, which, it is true, was added very late,³ the 'eighteen Purāṇas' are already mentioned. From all this it appears that Purāṇas, as a species of literature, existed long before the final redaction of the *Mahābhārata*, and that even in the Purāṇas which have come down to us there is much that is older than our present *Mahābhārata*.

It is, however, only an apparent paradox, when we say that the *Mahābhārata* is older than the Purāṇas, and that the Purāṇas are older than the *Mahābhārata*. For the Purāṇas are just as little unified works as the epic, and in them too, early and late portions are found side by side. In the numerous cases in which the Purāṇas agree with each other, and with the *Mahābhārata*, more or less literally, it is more probable that they all are derived from the same old source, than that one work is dependent on the other.⁴ This old source was, on the one hand, oral tradition, comprising Brahman traditions reaching back to Vedic times, as well as the bard poetry handed down in the circles of the Kṣatriyas,⁵ and on the other hand, it was certain definite texts, probably far less in bulk than our present Purāṇas. The number of these was probably not exactly eighteen from the outset. Perhaps there were only four, as indicated by the legendary report

¹ *Mahābhārata* III, 191, 16. As Hopkins, *loc. cit.*, pp. 48 f., has shown, the description in our *Vāyu-Purāṇa* is more ancient than the one given in the *Mahābhārata*.

² NGGW., 1897, pI, pp. 8 ff.

³ XVIII, 6, 95. Another verse, XVIII, 5, 46, is not to be found in all editions.

⁴ Of course we do not wish to deny that, in isolated cases, one Purāṇa may have copied from another.

⁵ I doubt, however, whether we are justified in drawing the line between the Kṣatriya tradition and the brahmanical tradition as definitely as is assumed by Pargiter.



in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*.¹ It is, however, most unlikely indeed that, as is assumed by some scholars,² all the Purāṇas originated in a *single* original Purāṇa. There was never *one* original Purāṇa, any more than there was *one* original Brāhmaṇa whence all the Brāhmaṇas sprang, or *one* original Upaniṣad whence all the Upaniṣads sprang. When, as we have seen above, ancient works here and there mention 'the Purāṇa', they only mean 'the old tradition' or 'Purāṇa literature', in the same way as the expressions 'Veda', 'Śruti', and 'Smṛti' are used in the singular. That our present Purāṇas are not the ancient works themselves which bore this title, can already be deduced from the fact that, in content, none of them agrees with the definition of the term Purāṇa as given in themselves. According to this certainly very old definition,³ every Purāṇa is to have 'five characteristics' (*pañcalakṣaṇa*), i.e., it is to treat five subjects: (1) *Sarga*, 'creation', (2) *Pratisarga*, 're-creation', i.e., the periodical annihilation and renewal of the worlds, (3) *Vaṃśa*, 'genealogy', i.e., the genealogy of the gods and Ṛṣis, (4) *Manvantarāṇi*, 'the Manu-periods of time', i.e., the great periods, each of which has a Manu or primal ancestor of the human race, and (5) *Vaṃśānucarita*, 'the history of the dynasties', viz., the early and later dynasties whose origin is traced back to the sun (*solar* dynasty) and the moon (*lunar* dynasty). These five things only partly form the contents of the Purāṇas handed down to us; some contain much more than what is included in the 'five characteristics', while others scarcely touch upon these subjects, but deal with quite different things. What is especially significant of almost all our Purāṇas, their *sectarian* character, i.e., their being dedicated to the cult of some god or other, of Viṣṇu or Śiva, is completely ignored by the old

¹ III, 6. According to this, the Sūta Romaharṣaṇa and three of his pupils wrote the four fundamental Purāṇasaṃhitā (mūlasaṃhitā). Similarly *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, XII 7, Cf. Burnouf, *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, I, Préface, pp. xx xvii ff. However, we should not place much reliance on these legends.

² A. M. T. Jackson, JBRAS., 21, 1905, Extra Number, pp. 67 ff.; A. Blau, ZDMG., 62, 1908, 337; Pargiter, *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, 35 ff.; 49 ff.

³ It is found in the more important Purāṇas, also in the ancient Indian lexicon, the *Amarakośa*, as well as in other lexicons.

definition.¹ In most of these works there are also considerable sections on the rights and duties of the castes and of the Āśramas, on the general brahmanical rites, especially the funeral sacrifices (*śrāddhas*)² as well as on particular ceremonies and feasts (*vratas*) in honour of Viṣṇu or Śiva, and frequently also sections on Śāṅkhya and Yoga philosophy.

In such Purāṇas as have preserved an old nucleus, we find sections on cosmogony and history of primeval times, corresponding to the 'five characteristics'. We find, too, genealogical lists of the ancient royal houses, continued from the first kings, whose origin is traced back to the sun and moon, down to the heroes of the great war of the *Mahābhārata*. As our Purāṇas are ascribed to Vyāsa, who is said to have lived at the beginning of the Kaliyuga contemporaneously with the heroes of the Bhārata battle, the history of 'the past' ends with the death of the Pāṇḍavas or shortly afterwards.³ In several of these Purāṇas,⁴ however, the royal dynasties of the 'past' are followed by lists of the kings of the 'future' in the form of *prophecies*.⁵ In these lists of kings of the Kali era, we meet, among others, the dynasties of the Śiśunāgas, Nandas, Mauryas, Śuṅgas, Andhras and Guptas

¹ In the *Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa* it is certainly said that the 'five characteristics' are only for the *upapurāṇas*, while the *mahāpurāṇas* ('the great Purāṇas') have *ten* 'characteristics', including 'praise of Viṣṇu and the gods individually'. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* likewise mentions 'ten characteristics' of the 'Purāṇa' in two places (II, 10, 1 and XII, 7, 8 ff.). (See E. Burnouf, *Le Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, t. I. Préf., pp. xlvii ff.). But these definitions, too, only partly correspond to the contents of the actually existing Purāṇas.

² Here the Purāṇas often agree literally with later law-books. Cf. W. Caland, *Altindischer Ahnenkult*, pp. 68, 79, 112.

³ When the Kaliyuga era had become current the Indians felt the need of associating the starting-point of the era with some important 'historical' event, and they used the Bhārata battle for this purpose. There was, however, a school of astronomers, thus Varāhamihira (died A.D. 587) with whom the historian Kalhana agrees, which does not date the beginning of the Kaliyuga from the battle of the Mahābhārata, but reckons this battle as having been fought in the 653rd year of the Kaliyuga (2449 B.C.). In the Aihole inscription (634 A.D.) the date 'after the Bhārata battle' is already mentioned. Cf. J. F. Fleet, JRAS., 1911, 675 ff. Indian kings were just as fond of tracing their ancestry back to those who fought in the Bhārata battle as European princes were anxious to prove their descent from the heroes of the Trojan war. Cf. Rapson, *Cambridge History*, I, p. 307. I consider it as entirely contrary to historical criticism to draw chronological conclusions as is done by Pargiter (*Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, pp. 175 ff.) from this fiction of the coincidence of the Bhārata battle with the beginning of the Kaliyuga.

⁴ *Matsya*-, *Vāyu*-, *Brahmāṇḍa*-, *Bhaviṣya*-, *Viṣṇu*-, *Bhāgavata*-, and *Garuḍa-Purāṇas*.

⁵ In *Rāmāyaṇa*, IV, 62, 3 *purāṇa* means 'a prophecy made in olden times'.

which are well known in history. Among the Śiśunāgas are Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru, who are mentioned in Jain and Buddhist writings as contemporaries of Mahāvira and Gautama Buddha (6th to 5th century B.C.); and with the Maurya Candragupta, who came to the throne in 322 B.C., we emerge into the clear daylight of history. Though these lists of kings of the Kaliyuga can only be utilised as historical sources, with caution and discrimination,¹ V. A. Smith² has shown that the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* is very reliable as regards the Maurya dynasty (326-185 B.C.) and that the *Matsya-Purāṇa* is also very reliable as regards the Andhra dynasty (which came to an end about 225 A.D.) whilst the *Vāyu-Purāṇa* describes the rule of the Guptas as it was under Candragupta I (about 320-330 A.D.). At the end of the lists of kings, these Purāṇas enumerate a series of dynasties of low and barbarian descent (Śūdras and Mlecchas), such as Abhīras, Gardabhas, Śakas, Yavanas, Tuṣāras, Hūṇas and so on, which were contemporary with the former, and then follows a dreary description of the Kali age. This prophecy reminds us of the account given by the Chinese pilgrim Sung-yun³ of the barbarian invasions in the northern Punjab in about 465 A.D. and of Kalhaṇa's⁴ vivid description of the rule of the Hun chieftains Toramāṇa (about 500 A.D.) and Mihirakula (about 515 A.D.) who ruled "like the god of death in the kingdom swamped by the barbarian hordes", and, surrounded day and night by thousands of murderers, took no pity even on women and children. Moreover, foreign dynasties ruled in India over and over again as early as in the first centuries of the Christian

¹ F. E. Pargiter has rendered valuable services to the criticism of these lists of kings, by his book: *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, London, 1913. It is probable that the sources of these prophecies are ancient annals and chronicles; for this reason we find occasional expressions such as 'abhavat', 'smṛta' in our texts, in spite of the prophetic future tense (cf. Pargiter, *loc. cit.*, p. ix). Pargiter gives good reasons for the hypothesis that these sources were written in Prākṛit; but we should not therefore jump to the conclusion that the Purāṇas as a whole were translated from the Prākṛit. Pargiter's views have been contested by A. B. Keith, *JRAS.*, 1914, 1021 ff.; 1915, 328 ff. Cf. the discussion *ib.* 141 ff., 799 ff.

² *Early History*, pp. 11 ff.; *ZDMG.*, 56, 1902, 654, 672 f.; 57, 1903, 607 f. Cf. D. R. Bhandarkar, *JBRAS.*, 22, 155 f.

³ Cf. S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, I, p. c; Smith, *Early History*, p. 328.

⁴ *Rājataranginī* I, 289 ff. Cf. Smith, *Early History*, 328 ff., 333 ff.

era. It is possible that we may have to interpret the prophecies about the evil Kaliyuga as an echo of these various barbarian invasions and foreign rules. The data are, however, too confused to serve as a basis for safe conclusions as to the date of origin of the Purāṇas. All that we can safely conclude is that the earlier Purāṇas must have come into being *before the 7th century*, for neither later dynasties nor later famous rulers such as for instance Harṣa, occur in the lists of kings.

Another point which would seem to bear out the theory that the *earlier* Purāṇas had come into being, with, to all intents and purposes, their present form, as early as in the first centuries of the Christian era, is the striking resemblance between the Buddhist Mahāyāna texts of the first centuries of the Christian era, and the Purāṇas. The *Lalitavistara* not only calls itself a 'Purāṇa', but really has much in common with the Purāṇas. Texts like *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha* and even some passages of the *Mahāvastu*, remind us of the sectarian Purāṇas not only by reason of the boundless exaggerations but also on account of the extravagance in the praise of *Bhakti*. The Digambara Jains, too, composed Purāṇas from the 7th century onwards.¹

It used to be the general opinion of Western scholars that our Purāṇas belong to the latest productions of Sanskrit literature and only originated in the last thousand years.² This view is certainly no longer tenable. For the poet *Bāṇa* already (about 625 A.D.) knows the Purāṇas well, and relates in his historical romance *Harṣacarita*, how he attended a reading of the *Vāyu-Purāṇa* in his native village. The philosopher *Kumārila* (about 750 A.D.) relies on the Purāṇas as sources of law, while *Śaṅkara* (9th century) and *Rāmānuja* (12th century) refer to them as ancient and sacred texts in support of their philosophical doctrines. It is also important

¹ Ravisēṇa wrote the *Padmapurāṇa* in 600 A.D. See also Pargiter, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* Transl., p. xiv.

² This view was first expressed by H. H. Wilson and often repeated after him. He saw references to the Mahomedan conquest in the description of the Kaliyuga. Vans Kennedy (s. Wilson, *Works* X, 257 ff.) already advocated emphatically a greater antiquity of the Purāṇas.

that the Arabian traveller *Alberūnī* (about 1030 A.D.) is very familiar with the Purāṇas, gives a list of the 'eighteen Purāṇas' and not only quotes *Āditya-*, *Vāyu-*, *Matsya-*, and *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, but has also studied one of the later Purāṇa texts, the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, very minutely.¹ The erroneous opinion that the Purāṇas must be 'quite modern' is also connected with the formerly prevalent notion that the Purāṇa religion, the Viṣṇu and Śiva worship, was of a late date. More recent investigations have proved, however, that the sects of the Viṣṇu and Śiva worshippers at all events reach back to pre-Christian and perhaps pre-Buddhist times.²

The orthodox Hindus themselves regard the Purāṇas as extremely ancient. They believe that the same Vyāsa who compiled the Vedas and composed the *Mahābhārata* was also, in the beginning of the Kaliyugā,³ the present age of the world, the author of eighteen Purāṇas. But this Vyāsa is a form of the exalted god Viṣṇu himself, 'for' (says the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*) 'who else could have composed the *Mahābhārata*?' His pupil was the Sūta Lomahaṛṣaṇa, and to him he imparted the Purāṇas.⁴ Thus the Purāṇas have a divine origin. And the Vedānta philosopher Śaṅkara, for a proof of the personal existence of the gods, turns to Itihāsas and Purāṇas, because these, as he says, rest not only upon the Veda, but also upon sense-perception, namely, on the perception of people like

¹ Cf. G. Bühler, *Ind. Ant.*, 19, 1890, 382 ff.; 25, 1896, 328 ff.; P. Deussen, *System des Vedānta*, Leipzig, 1883, p. 36; Smith, *Early History*, pp. 22 ff. A manuscript of the *Skanda-Purāṇa* in Gupta Script is assigned by Haraprasād Sāstrī (JASB., 1893, p. 250) to the middle of the 7th century. In records of land-grants of the 5th century B.C. verses are quoted, which, according to Pargiter (JRAS., 1912, 248 ff., *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, p. 49), occur only in the *Padma-*, *Bhaviṣya-*, and *Brahma-Purāṇa*, and hence he concludes that these particular Purāṇas are earlier. It is more probable, however, that these verses both in the inscription and in the Purāṇas were taken from earlier Dharmaśāstras. Cf. Keith, JRAS., 1912, 248 ff., 756, and Fleet, *ib.*, 1046 ff. Fleet himself believes that chronological deductions could be made from the fact that in some of the Purāṇas the planets, beginning with the sun, are enumerated in the same order in which they appear in the days of the week, which points to the period after 600 A.D. However, any arguments of this nature are conclusive merely for isolated chapters, and not for complete Purāṇa texts.

² Cf. G. Bühler, *Ep. Ind.*, II, 1894, p. 95. Kadphises II (about 78 A.D.) was so ardent a Śiva-worshipper that he had a picture of Śiva stamped on his coins (V. A. Smith, *loc. cit.*, p. 318).

³ Thus according to *Mahābhārata* XII, 349 and Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtras*, III, 3, 32.

⁴ *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, III, 4 and 6. The name Lomahaṛṣaṇa (or Romahaṛṣaṇa) is explained etymologically in the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, I, 16, as "one who, by his beautiful narrations, causes the hairs (loman) on the bodies of the hearers to stand on end (harṣaṇa) with joy."



Vyāsa, who personally spoke with the gods.¹ The authority of the Purāṇas certainly cannot be compared with that of the Vedas. Itihāsa and Purāṇa are, to a certain extent, merely a supplement to the Veda, principally intended for the instruction of women and Śūdras, who are not entitled to the study of the Veda. Thus already an ancient verse says: "By Itihāsas and Purāṇas the Veda is to be strengthened: for the Veda fears an unlearned man, thinking that the latter might injure it."² Only the Veda, says Rāmānuja,³ serves for the attainment of the highest knowledge, the knowledge of Brahman, while Itihāsa and Purāṇa lead only to the cleansing from sins. The Purāṇas, then, are sacred books of the second grade.⁴ This is easily explained, for originally the Purāṇas were not priestly literature at all. The *Sūtas* or bards were undoubtedly the creators and bearers of the oldest Purāṇa poetry as well as of the epic.⁵ This is also borne out by the circumstance that in almost all the Purāṇas the *Sūta* Lomahaṛṣaṇa or his son Ugraśravas, 'the Sauti', *i.e.*, 'the son of the Sūta', appears as narrator. This is so much the case that *Sūta* and *Sauti* are used almost as proper names in the Purāṇas. But the Sūta was certainly no Brahman, and he had nothing to do with the Veda.⁶ But when this old bard poetry ceased, we do not know when, this literature did not pass into the hands of the *learned* Brahmins, the Veda-

¹ *Vedānta-Sūtra*, I, 3, 33. SBE., Vol. 34, p. 222. Śaṅkara adds: From the fact that men no longer to-day speak with the gods, it in nowise follows that this was not the case in ancient times.

² The verse is quoted by Rāmānuja (SBE., Vol. 48, p. 91) as a Purāṇa text. It is to be found in *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, I, 201; *Mahābhārata*, I, 1, 267, and *Vāsiṣṭha-Dharmas*, 27, 6.

³ SBE., Vol. 48, pp. 338 f.

⁴ This is expressed the most clearly by Rāmānuja (on *Vedānta-Sūtra*, II, 1, 3, SBE., Vol. 48, p. 413) when he says that the Purāṇas have indeed been proclaimed by the Creator Hiraṇyagarbha, but that they, just as Hiraṇyagarbha himself, are not free from the qualities of passion (*rajas*) and of darkness (*taṃas*) and are therefore subject to error.

⁵ According to the *Vāyu*- and the *Padma-Purāṇa*, the preservation of the genealogies of the gods, Ṛṣis and famous kings, is the duty of the *Sūtas*. Cf. Pargiter, *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, pp. 15 ff. Thus even at the present day the Bhāṭas preserve the genealogies of the Kṣatriyas; s. C. V. Vaidya, *History of Mediaeval Hindu India*, II, Poona, 1924, pp. 260 ff.

⁶ "The Sūta has no claim at all to the study of the Vedas," says the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, I, 33, and also according to *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, I, 4, 13, the *Sūta* is conversant "with the whole realm of literature with the exception of the Veda". Cf. E. Burnouf, *Le Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, I, pp. xxix and liii ff.



knowers, but the lower priesthood, which congregated in temples and places of pilgrimage, took possession of it; and these rather uneducated temple-priests used it for the glorification of the deities whom they served, and in later times more and more for the recommendation of the temples and places of pilgrimage in which they maintained and often enriched themselves.¹ But how very strongly, nevertheless, even to the present day, the Hindus believe in the sanctity of the Purāṇas, is best shown by a lecture delivered by Manilal N. Dvivedi at the Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm (1889).² As a man of Western education he spoke of anthropology and geology, of Darwin and Haeckel, Spencer and Quatrefages, but only in order to prove that the view of life of the Purāṇas and their teachings upon the Creation are scientific truths, and he finds in them altogether only the highest truth and deepest wisdom—if one only understands it all correctly, *i.e.*, symbolically.

The Purāṇas are valuable to the historian and to the antiquarian as sources of political history by reason of their genealogies, even though they can only be used with great caution and careful discrimination.³ At all events they are of inestimable value from the point of view of the history of religion, and on this head alone deserve far more careful study than has hitherto been devoted to them. They afford us far greater insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism—its mythology, its idol-worship, its theism and pantheism, its love of God, its philosophy and its superstitions, its festivals and ceremonies and its ethics, than any other works.⁴ As literary productions, on the other hand, they are by no means a pleasing phenomenon. They are in every respect regard-

¹ According to Manu, III, 152, temple-priests (*devalaka*) cannot be invited to sacrifices any more than physicians and vendors of meat. The historian Kalhaṇa speaks of these priests with undisguised contempt. Cf. M. A. Stein, Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarahṅgi*translated.....Westminster 1900, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. 19 f. The epics, as well as the Purāṇas, are now-a-days recited by special 'reciters' (*Pāṭhakas*) or 'narrators' (*Kathakas*) belonging to the Brahman caste.

² OC., VIII Stockholm, II, pp. 199 ff.

³ As historical sources they surely do not deserve such confidence as is placed in them by F. E. Pargiter (JRAS., 1914, 267 ff., *Bhandarkar Com. Vol.*, pp. 107 ff., and *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, 77 ff., 119 ff. and *passim*).

⁴ Cf. Pargiter, ERE., X, pp. 451 ff. and J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 136 ff. and *passim*.

less of form and proportions. The careless language and poor versification, in which the grammar often suffers for the sake of the metre, are just as characteristic of these works as are the confused medley of contents and the boundless exaggerations. Just a few examples of the latter. While in the *R̥gveda* Urvaśi sojourns with Purūravas for *four* years, the two lovers in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* spend 61,000 years in pleasure and delight. While even the older Purāṇas know only *seven* hells, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* speaks of ‘hundreds and thousands’ of hells, and the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* counts no less than 8,400,000.¹ The later the Purāṇa—this may be regarded as a general rule—the more boundless are the exaggerations. This, too, indicates that it was an inferior class of literary men, belonging to the lower, uneducated priesthood, which was engaged in the transmission of the Purāṇas. Yet, many of the old legends of kings and some very old genealogical verses (*anuvamśaśloka*) and song-verses (*gāthās*) have been saved from the original *bard poetry* and incorporated into the later texts which have come down to us. Fortunately, too, the compilers of the Purāṇas, who collected their materials from anywhere and everywhere without choice, did not despise the good either, and received into their texts many a dialogue, in form and contents recalling the Upaniṣads, as well as some profound legends, taken from the old ascetic poetry. Thus the following short survey of the most important Purāṇas and their contents will show that even in the desert of Purāṇa literature oases are not wanting.

SURVEY OF THE PURĀṆA-LITERATURE

In the Purāṇas themselves which have come down to us, the number of existing Purāṇas ‘composed by Vyāsa’ is unanimously given as *eighteen*; and also with reference to their titles there is almost complete agreement. Most of the Purāṇas also agree in the order in which they enumerate the eighteen Purāṇas, *viz.* :

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. Brāhma | 3. Vaiṣṇava |
| 2. Pādma | 4. Śaiva or Vāyaviya |

¹ Scherman, *Visionslitteratur*, pp. 32 f.
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- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 5. Bhāgavata | 12. Varāha |
| 6. Nāradiya | 13. Skānda |
| 7. Mārkaṇḍeya | 14. Vāmana |
| 8. Āgneya | 15. Kaurma |
| 9. Bhaviṣya or Bhaviṣyat | 16. Mātsya |
| 10. Brahmavaivarta | 17. Garuḍa |
| 11. Liṅga | 18. Brahmāṇḍa ¹ |

It is peculiar that this list of 'eighteen Purāṇas' is given in each one of them, as though none were the first and none the last, but all had already existed when each separate one was composed. All these Purāṇas point out in extravagant terms the advantages to be attained both in this world and in the world beyond, by reading and hearing these works. In some places² the length (number of ślokaś) of the various Purāṇas is mentioned, but the texts which have come down to us are mostly shorter. In one passage of the *Padma-Purāṇa* (I, 62) all of the eighteen Purāṇas are enumerated as parts of Viṣṇu's body (the *Brahma-Purāṇa* is his head, the *Padma-Purāṇa* is his heart, etc.), and are thus all stamped as sacred books. In another text of the same work,³ on the other hand, we find the Purāṇas classified according to the three Guṇas⁴ from the standpoint of Viṣṇuism. According to this

¹ The list is given thus in *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, III, 6; *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, XII, 13 (varying only slightly XII, 7, 23 f.); *Padma-Purāṇa*, I, 62; *Varāha-Purāṇa*, 112; *Mātsya-Purāṇa*, 53; *Agni-Purāṇa*, 272 and at the end of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, *Padma-Purāṇa*, IV, III; VI, 219; and *Kūrma-Purāṇa*, I, 1 only diverge by putting 6 after 9. *Padma-Purāṇa*, IV, iii has also the order 16, 13, 12, 15, 14 instead of 12-16, and *Padma-Purāṇa*, VI, 263 has the order 17, 13, 14, 15, 16 instead of 13-17. *Saura-Purāṇa*, IX, 6 f. has the order 5, 8, 7, 9, 6 instead of 5-9. The *Liṅga-Purāṇa* (s. Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, p. 44) has the order: 1-5, 9, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14-17, 13, 18. A list in which the order is quite different, is that of the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 104, 1 ff. *Mātsya*, *Bhaviṣya*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Bhāgavata*, *Brahma*, *Vāmana*, *Ādika*, *Anila* (i.e., *Vāyu*), *Nāradiya*, *Vainateya* (i.e., *Garuḍa*), *Pādma*, *Kūrma*, *Śaukara* (*Saukara*? *Varāha*?), *Skānda*. (These are only 16, though '18 Purāṇas' are spoken about; a verse has probably been omitted. For a similar list in the *Purāṇasamhitāśiddhāntasāra*, s. F. R. Gambier-Parry, *Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS.* purchased for the Max Müller Memorial Fund, Oxford, 1922, p. 43.) The list in the *Devībhāgavata-Purāṇa* (quoted by Burnouf, *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, Préface, I, p. lxxxvi) also begins with the *Mātsya*, but otherwise diverges. Alberūnī (*Sachau*, I, p. 130) gives a list of the 18 Purāṇas, which was read to him from the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, and which agrees with our list, and also a second, widely diverging list, which was dictated to him. A list which is very different from the usual one is given in the *Bṛhaddharma-Purāṇa*, 25, 18 ff.

² *Mātsya-Purāṇa*, 53, 13 ff; *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, XII, 13; *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 104, 1-10; *Agni-Purāṇa*, 272.

³ In the *Uttarādhyāya* of the *Padma-Purāṇa*, 263, 81 ff.

⁴ See above, pp. 377-78.

classification, only the Viṣṇuite Purāṇas (Viṣṇu, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Padma, Varāha) are of the quality of 'goodness' (*sāttvika*) and lead to salvation ; the Purāṇas dedicated to Brahman (Brahmāṇḍa, Brahmaparivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, Bhaviṣya, Vāmana, Brahma) are of the quality of 'passion' (*rājasa*) and only serve to attain heaven ; whilst the Purāṇas in praise of Śiva (Matsya, Kūrma, Liṅga, Śiva, Skanda, Agni) are described as charged with 'darkness' and as leading to hell. The texts which have come down to us, only partially agree with this artificial classification.¹ All this is additional confirmation of the fact that none of the Purāṇas has come down to us in its original form.

Besides the eighteen Purāṇas, which are often called the 'great Purāṇas' (*mahāpurāṇa*), some of the Purāṇas themselves make mention of so-called Upapurāṇas or 'Secondary Purāṇas', whose number also is occasionally given as eighteen.² While, however, in the enumerations of the Purāṇas there is almost complete agreement with regard to the titles, this is by no means the case with the titles of the Upapurāṇas. Obviously there was a definite tradition about the existence of eighteen Purāṇas, while any modern religious text could assume the title of an 'Upapurāṇa', if the author did not prefer to declare his work as a part of one of the 'eighteen Purāṇas'. The latter is the case especially with the exceedingly numerous *Māhātmyas*, i.e., 'glorifications' of sacred places (places of pilgrimage, *tīrthas*).³ But also many *Stotras*, i.e., 'songs of praise' (usually to Viṣṇu or Śiva, but also to other deities), *kalpas*, i.e., 'rituals' and *Ākhyānas* or

¹ For instance, the *Matsya-Purāṇa* which is condemned as a *tāmasa*, has both Viṣṇuite and Śivaite chapters in our text ; the *Brahmaparivarta-Purāṇa* is dedicated rather to Kṛṣṇa than to Brahman, the *Brahma-Purāṇa* teaches sun-worship as well as Viṣṇu and Śiva worship, the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* and the *Bharatya-Purāṇa* are not sectarian at all, and so on. The above classification of the Purāṇas also shows that we can hardly talk of a 'canon of eighteen Purāṇas' (s. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 275) ; for the Purāṇas are not the books of one religion, neither do they form a unified whole in any respect. For the religious views of the Purāṇas, cf. Pargiter, ERE, X, 451 ff.

² But the *Matsya-Purāṇa* mentions only four Upapurāṇas. The *Brahmaparivarta-Purāṇa*, without enumerating them, says that eighteen Upap. exist. The *Kūrma-Purāṇa* enumerates them.

³ The 'Māhātmyas' of sacred texts or of rites and festivals are not so numerous.

Upākhyānas, i.e., 'legends', give themselves out as belonging to one or the other of the ancient *Purāṇas*.

We now give a short summary of the contents of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, in which we can only dwell a little longer on the most important ones.

1. The *Brāhma* or *Brahma-Purāṇa*.¹ This is given as the first in all the lists, and hence is sometimes called *Ādi-Purāṇa*, i.e., 'the first *Purāṇa*'.² In the introduction it is related that the Ṛṣis in the Naimiṣa-forest are visited by Lomahaṛṣaṇa, the Sūta, and they invite him to tell them of the origin and the end of the world. Thereupon the Sūta declares himself prepared to impart to them the *Purāṇa* which the creator *Brahman* once revealed to Dakṣa, one of the primal ancestors of the human race. Then follow the legends, more or less common to all the *Purāṇas*, of the creation of the world, the birth of the primal man *Manu* and his descendants, the origin of the gods, demigods and other beings, about the kings of the solar and lunar dynasties, as well as a description of the earth with its various divisions, of the hells and heavens. By far the major portion of this *Purāṇa* is devoted to glorifications (*māhātmyas*) of sacred places (*tīrthas*). Oṇḍradeśa or Utkala (the present-day Orissa) with its sacred places and temples is described in very great detail. As Utkala owes its sanctity to sun-worship, we find here also myths of the origin of the Ādityas (the gods of light) and of the sun-god Sūrya. The description of a forest sacred to Śiva in Utkala gives rise to stories of the birth of Umā, the daughter of the Himālaya, and her marriage with Śiva, as well as other Śiva myths. A hymn to Śiva (Chap. 37) is also inserted here. Nevertheless the *Purāṇa* is by no means Śivaite, for the *Mārkaṇḍeyākhyāna* (Chap. 52 ff.) contains numerous Viṣṇu legends, and rituals and stotras of the Viṣṇu cult. Here, too, (Chap. 178) the

¹ I.e. 'The *Brahma* *Purāṇa*' or 'The *Purāṇa* of *Brahman*'; all the other double titles, e.g., *Vaiṣṇava-Purāṇa* ('the Viṣṇuite') or *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (the *Purāṇa* of Viṣṇu) are similarly explained. The *Brahma-Purāṇa* has been published in *ĀnSS* No. 28.

² But there are other *Purāṇas* also which occasionally call themselves 'Ādi-purāṇa'. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1184 f., describes, for instance, an *Upapurāṇa* which calls itself *Ādipurāṇa* and is devoted to the praise of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

charming legend of the ascetic *Kaṇḍu*¹ is related, who spends many hundred years in sweet love dalliance with a beautiful Apsaras, and finally awaking from the intoxication of love, thinks that only a few hours of a single day have passed. A large section (Chaps. 180-212) is devoted to Kṛṣṇa. The well-known legends of Kṛṣṇa's childhood, adventures and heroic deeds are told in exact, often literal agreement with the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*. The introduction to this passage mentions the incarnations of Viṣṇu, which are then described in detail in Chap. 213. The last chapters contain rules for the Śrāddhas, for a moral life, the duties of the castes and āśramas, the rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell, and the merit of Viṣṇu worship. Then come a few chapters on the periods of the world (*yugas*) and the periodical destruction of the world, and in conclusion explanations on Sāṃkhya and Yoga and the path leading to salvation.

The Gautamīmāhātmya, the glorification of the sacred places on the Ganges (Chaps. 70-175), frequently appears in manuscripts as an independent text. The Uttara-Khaṇḍa (*i.e.*, 'last section') of the *Brahma-Purāṇa*, which occurs in some manuscripts, is nothing but a māhātmya of a sacred river Balajā (Banās in Marwar?).

Surely only a small portion of what has come down to us as the *Brahma-Purāṇa* can lay claim to be an ancient and genuine Purāṇa. About the middle of the 7th century A.D. Hsüan-Tsang still found over a hundred Buddhist monasteries with a myriad monks, but he also already found 50 Deva temples in Orissa. Śivaism was introduced in Orissa in the 6th century, and Viṣṇuism still later.² As the sun temple of Konārka, which is mentioned in our Purāṇa, was not built until 1241, at least the large section on the sacred places of Orissa cannot be earlier than the 13th century.³ It is probable, however, that the Māhātmyas do not belong to the original Purāṇa.

¹ Printed in Ch. Lassen's '*Anthologia Sanscritica*', translated into German by A. W. v. Schlegel, *Indische Bibliothek*, I, 1822, pp. 257 ff., and into French by A. L. Chezy in JAI., 1822, pp. 1 ff. The legend is also related in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, I, 15.

² See Th. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* (London, 1905), II, p. 193; W. Crooke, ERE., Vol. 9, p. 566.

³ See Wilson, *Works*, III, p. 18.

The *Saura-Purāṇa*,¹ which claims to be a supplement (*khila*) of the *Brahma-Purāṇa*, but which is quoted as an authority by Hemādri as early as in the 13th century, proves that there must have been an earlier *Brahma-Purāṇa*. The *Saura-Purāṇa* ('Purāṇa of the sun-god') which is mentioned in the lists of the Upapurāṇas, is of great value as regards our knowledge of Śivaism, especially of the Liṅga cult. Its main purpose is to glorify god Śiva. In many places, however, Śiva is identified with the sun-god who reveals the Purāṇa, or else the sun-god recommends Śiva worship. The advantages of Śiva worship are praised in the most extravagant terms, instructions are given for the worship of the god and the liṅga, and many Śiva legends are told. A few chapters also deal with the genealogies; in Chapter 31 on the descent of Yadu there is a version of the Urvaśi legend.² In the philosophical sections the work takes up an intermediate position between the orthodox systems. On the one hand Śiva is explained as the Ātman, in accordance with the Vedānta, and, on the other hand, the creation from the primal matter (*prakṛti*) is explained, as in the Sāṃkhya. Three chapters (38-40) are devoted to polemics against the system of Madhva (1197-1276), which is important from the point of view of chronology.³

II. The *Pādma* or *Padma-Purāṇa*. There are two different recensions of this voluminous work.⁴ The printed edition,⁵ consisting of the six books Ādi, Bhūmi, Brahma,

¹ Text published in ĀnSS No. 18, 1889. An analysis with extracts and partial translation of the work has been given by W. Jahn, *Das Saurapurāṇam*, Strassburg 1908. The *Saura-Purāṇa*, is sometimes also called *Āditya-Purāṇa*. However, there is another *Āditya-Purāṇa*, which is different from, though related to the *Saura-Purāṇa*. See Jahn, *loc. cit.*, pp. ix, xiv and *Festschrift Kuhn*, p. 308. The *Brahma-Purāṇa*, too, is sometimes called 'Saura-Purāṇa.' Cf. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1185 ff.

² See P. E. Pavolini, GSAI., 21, 1908, pp. 291 ff., and Jahn, *Das Saurapurāṇam*, p. 81.

³ See A. Barth in *Mélanges Charles de Harlez*, Leyden, 1896, pp. 12 ff. As Madhva lived from 1197-1276 and Hemādri wrote between 1260 and 1309, the *Saura-Purāṇa* would have been compiled approximately between 1230 and 1250. However, as Chapters 38-40 do not occur in all the MSS. (s. Edition, p. 125 note, and Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, p. 1188), it is more probable that they have been interpolated, and that the work is earlier. Cf. Jahn, *loc. cit.*, p. xiv.

⁴ In the Purāṇa itself (V, 1, 54; VI, 219, 28) and in the lists, the number of Ślokas is said to be 55,000. However, according to Wilson, the Bengali recension only contains nearly 45,000 ślokas, whilst the edition contains 48,452.

⁵ Edited by V. N. Mandlick in ĀnSS No. 28, 1894, 4 vols. At the end of the Bhūmi-Khaṇḍa in this edition there is a verse which enumerates the Khaṇḍas with the

Pātala, Śrīṣṭi and Uttarakhaṇḍa, is a later recension. The earlier one, which has come down to us only in Bengali manuscripts, consists of the following five books or Khaṇḍas.¹

Book I, *Śrīṣṭikhaṇḍa*, i.e., 'section of the Creation', commences with the usual introduction :² Lomaḥarṣaṇa sends his son, the Sūta Ugraśravas, to the Naimiṣa forest to recite the Purāṇas to the Ṛṣis assembled there. At the request of Śaunaka he tells them the *Padma-Purāṇa*, so-called after the lotus (*padma*) in which the god Brahman appears at the creation. The Sūta then reproduces the account of the creation as he has heard it from Brahman's son Pulastya. The cosmological and cosmogonic myths are here too related similarly as in the other Purāṇas. But in this book, it is not Viṣṇu who is assumed as the first cause, but the highest Brahman in the form of the personal god Brahman. Nevertheless, even this book is Viṣṇuite in character, and contains myths and legends for the glorification of the god Viṣṇu. After the account of the Creation come the usual genealogies of the solar dynasty, into which a section about the Pitṛs, the 'fathers' of the human race and their cult by means of Śrāddhas has been interwoven,³ and of the lunar dynasty down to the time of Kṛṣṇa. Myths are then told of the conflicts between gods and demons, followed by a chapter which is of interest from the point of view of the history of religion,⁴ and from which we here give a short extract.

At first the gods were defeated by the demons. However, Bṛhaspati, the teacher of the gods, finally caused the gods to triumph in the following manner. In the guise of Śukra, the teacher of the Asuras, he goes to the

same titles and in the same order as in the Bengali MSS. The printed recension thus itself proves that the Bengali recension is the earlier one. Cf. Lüders, NGGW., 1897, I, p. 8. In the Śrīṣṭi-Khaṇḍa I, 53-60, the *Padma-Purāṇa* is described as consisting of five Parvans; (1) Pāuṣkaram, treating of the creation, (2) Īrthaparvan, about mountains, islands and oceans, (3) a chapter on the kings who offered rich sacrificial gifts, (4) a chapter on the genealogies of the kings, and (5) a chapter on salvation. This, too, corresponds to the arrangement in the Bengali recension in all essentials.

¹ My account of the Bengali recension is based on the Oxford manuscripts, which I inspected in 1898, and on the descriptions by Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, I, pp. 11 ff. and Wilson, *Works*, III, pp. 21 ff; VI, pp. xxix ff.

² In the ĀnSS edition, too, the Śrīṣṭi-Khaṇḍa begins as though it were the beginning of the Purāṇa, but it has 82 Adhyāyas here, whilst in the Bengali recension it only consists of 46 (Wilson) or 45 (Aufrecht).

³ Chapt. 9-11 in ĀnSS edition.

⁴ V, 13, pp. 316 ff. in ĀnSS edition. Cf. *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, III, 17, 41-18, 33.

Asuras, and by means of heretical speeches, lures them from their pious faith in the Vedas. He tells them that the Veda and the tenets of the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas are full of violence (*hiṃsā*), and that they are preached by married teachers. How then can there be any good in them? How can Śiva, the god in the form of a semi-female (*ardhanārīśvāhṛa*), surrounded by hosts of evil spirits and even adorned with bones,¹ tread the path of salvation? How can Viṣṇu, who uses violence, attain to salvation? If the path to heaven consists of felling a tree to make a sacrificial stake out of it, of killing a sacrificial animal and causing slaughter, what is the path to hell? How is it possible to attain heaven by sexual intercourse, or purity by earth and ashes? Soma seduced Tārā the wife of Bṛhaspati; Budha, the son whom she bore, violated her; Indra committed adultery with Ahalyā, the wife of the Ṛṣi Gautama. Then the demons beg him to tell them to which god they can fly for safety. Bṛhaspati considers in what way he can demoralise them. Viṣṇu now comes to his aid, by causing the phantom figures of a nude Jain monk (*digambara*) and a Buddhist monk (*raktāmbara*, 'red-mantle') to appear, to initiate the demons into Jain and Buddhist doctrines. After thus giving up their old (brahmanical) way of life, they yield dominion to god Indra.

One of the principal parts of the book consists of the description of the lake Puṣkara (Pokher in Ajmir),² sacred to Brahman, which is recommended and glorified as a place of pilgrimage. Numerous myths and legends, many of which occur in different connections in other Purāṇas, are told in praise of Puṣkara. Moreover, various feasts and vows (*vrata*) in honour of the goddess Durgā are mentioned here. Thereupon the theme of the Creation is resumed. The book concludes with myths of Viṣṇu as the destroyer of demons, and the birth and marriage of Skanda.³

Book II, *Bhūmikhaṇḍa*,⁴ i.e., 'section of the earth', begins with legends of Somaśarman, who in a later rebirth

¹ One of Śiva's forms is that of the half-female. His adornment is a wreath of human skulls, and his retinue is formed by the *Bhūtas* or ghosts.

² The *Sṛṣṭi-Khaṇḍa* is therefore also called *Pauṣkara-Khaṇḍa*.

³ The contents of the *Sṛṣṭi-Khaṇḍa* are still more variegated in the *ĀnSS* edition, where among other things, Chaps. 61-63 are devoted to the cult of Gaṇeśa and the final chapters to the cult of Durgā. The *Ādi-Khaṇḍa*, with which the edition begins, consists almost entirely of *Māhātmyas* of various Tīrthas. Only the last chapters (50-60) deal with Viṣṇu-bhakti and the duties of the castes and āśramas.

⁴ On the whole it corresponds to the *Bhūmikhaṇḍa* in the *ĀnSS* edition.

became the famous Viṣṇu worshipper Prahlāda.¹ The aim of the legends is to explain why on the one hand he was born among the demons, and yet, on the other hand, was able to become so great a devotee of Viṣṇu. Besides a description of the earth, this book contains numerous legends which are intended to prove the sanctity of various tīrthas or holy places. Not only sacred places are regarded as tīrthas, but also persons, such as the teacher, the father, or the wife. As a proof of the fact that a wife can be a 'tīrtha' there is told,² for instance the story of Sukalā, whose husband goes on a pilgrimage and leaves her behind in want and misery; the love-god Kāma and the king of gods, Indra, try in vain to seduce her: she remains faithful to her husband, and when he returns from the pilgrimage, he (!) receives a divine reward on account of the virtues of his wife. Here, too, in order to prove that a son can be "a tīrtha", the story of Yayāti and his son Pūru, already known to us from the *Mahābhārata*, is told.

Book III, *Svargakhaṇḍa*,³ i.e., 'section of the heaven', gives a description of the various worlds of the gods, of the highest heaven of Viṣṇu, Vaikuṇṭha, the worlds of the Bhūtas, Piśācas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas and Apsaras, the worlds of Sūrya, Indra, Agni, Yama, and so on, into which are woven numerous myths and legends. A mention of King Bharata gives rise to the narration of the story of Śakuntalā, which is here not told as in the *Mahābhārata*, but more in agreement with the drama of Kālidāsa. A comparison of Kālidāsa's drama with the versions of the *Mahābhārata* and of the *Padma-Purāṇa* shows that in all probability Kālidāsa used the last-mentioned as a source.⁴ A description of the world of the Apsaras is the occasion for narrating the legend of

¹ It is here taken for granted that the actual legend of Prahlāda, as told in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (s. below) is known.

² Sukalācarita in ĀnSS edition Adhy. 41-60.

³ There is an English translation of the *Svargakhaṇḍa* by Panchānan-Tarkaratna, Calcutta, 1906, which I have not seen.

⁴ This has been shown by Haradatta Śarmā, *Padmapurāṇa and Kālidāsa*, Calcutta, 1925 (Calcutta Oriental Series, No. 17 E. 10). Professor Śarmā here also gives the text of the Śakuntalā episode according to the Bengali MSS. Wilson (Works, III, p. 40) had maintained that the Purāṇa utilised Kālidāsa's drama.

Purūravas and Urvaśī. Also numerous other legends, which are known from the epics, recur in this book. It further contains instructions upon the duties of the castes and of the āśramas, upon the modes of Viṣṇu-worship and much upon ritual and morality.

Book IV, *Pātālakhaṇḍa*, i.e., 'section of the nether world', first describes the subterranean regions, in particular the dwellings of the Nāgas or snake-deities. A mention of Rāvaṇa is the cause of the narration of the whole Rāma-legend, which is here given partly in conformity with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but also often in literal agreement with Kālidāsa's epic *Raghuvamśa*.¹ Here we also find the Ṛṣyaśṛṅga-legend in a version which is older than that in our *Mahābhārata*.² The actual Rāma-legend is preceded by a story of the forefathers of Rāma, beginning with Manu, the son of the sun-god, and his rescue from the flood. The slaying of Rāvaṇa, who was a Brahman, has laid the guilt of the murder of a Brahman on Rāma. By way of expiation he arranges a horse-sacrifice. In accordance with the prescribed rules, the horse destined for the sacrifice is let loose to roam at will for the space of one year, accompanied by a host of warriors with Śatrughna at their head. The adventures of the steed and his followers on their wanderings over the whole of India take up a considerable portion of the book; many sacred places are described, and legends attached to them are told. At length the horse reaches Vālmiki's hermitage, which is an occasion for narrating that part of the Rāma-legend which concerns Sitā.³ Detailed instruction on the eighteen Purāṇas then follows. Here it is said that Vyāsa first proclaimed the *Padma-Purāṇa*, then sixteen others, and finally the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, which is glorified as the most sacred book of the Viṣṇu-worshippers. The book ends with a few chapters, probably

¹ H. Śarmā *loc. cit.*, has made it appear probable that, in this case also, the *Padma-Purāṇa* was Kālidāsa's source, and not, as Wilson (Works, III, p. 47) assumed, that the compiler of the Purāṇa drew from the *Raghuvamśa*. H. Śarmā, *loc. cit.*, has published a critical edition of the text of this chapter (which is missing in the AnSS edition).

² This has been proved by Lüders, NGGW., 1897, I, pp. 8 ff. This circumstance is further proof of the greater antiquity of the Bengali recension of the *Padma-Purāṇa*.

³ Wilson (Works, III, p. 51) says: "This part of the work agrees in some respects with the *Uttara-Rāma Charitra*, but has several gossiping and legendary additions."

added at a very late date, on Kṛṣṇa and the cowherdresses, with mention of Rādhā, on the duties of Viṣṇu-worshippers, the sanctity of the Śalagrāma stone and other details of the Viṣṇu cult.¹

Book V, *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, i.e., 'last section', is a very long book expounding the Viṣṇu cult and the feasts and ceremonies connected with it, in the most impressive manner. A large portion is devoted to the glorification of the month Māgha, which is especially sacred to Viṣṇu. The silliest of legends are related as evidence of the great merit of bathing during this month. Another section glorifies the month Kārttikeya, in which the giving away of lamps is especially meritorious. In order to give especial prominence to the Viṣṇuite standpoint, the author causes Śiva himself, in a conversation with his wife Pārvatī to declare the glory of Viṣṇu and to recite a long account of Viṣṇu's avatāras, which involves a repetition of the entire Rāma-legend in summary and the Kṛṣṇa-legend with a fair amount of detail. In answer to Pārvatī's question who the heretics are, it is Śiva himself who declares that the Śivaite teachers and the adherents of the Śivaite Pāsupata sect are among the heretics. In another passage we find, curiously enough, the cruel goddess Durgā holding forth upon Ahimsā. Śiva also explains what Viṣṇu-Bhakti is, and the various forms of the Viṣṇu cult. This book also contains a glorification of the *Bhagavadgītā*,² in fact there are legends to illustrate the merit of reading each single canto. One chapter contains the enumeration of the thousand names of Viṣṇu, in another Rādhā is identified with the great goddess Lakṣmī, and the celebration of her birthday is described. The sectarian bias

¹ The Pātālakhanda in the ĀnSS edition only partly agrees with that of the Bengali recension. The sequence of the chapters is different, and it also contains a few chapters devoted to the Śiva cult (105-111). In the edition the Pātālakhanda is preceded by the short Brahmakhanda, which consists mainly of descriptions of Viṣṇuite feast days. Chapter 7, treating of the birthday feasts of Rādhā (*rādhājanmāṣṭami*), indicates late origin. The cult of Rādhā is mentioned neither in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃśa*, nor in the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the earlier Purāṇas. See below (*Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa*).

² *Gītāmāhātmya*, Adhy. 171-188 in ĀnSS edition, where a glorification of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (Adhy. 189-194) follows after it. This *Bhāgavatamāhātmya* also appears as an independent work in MSS. as well as in printed editions. The *Māghamāhātmya* and other parts of the Uttara-khaṇḍa also occur as independent works.

of this book cannot be better illustrated, however, than by the following legend :

A quarrel once arose among the Ṛṣis as to which of the three great gods, Brahman, Viṣṇu or Śiva, was deserving of greatest worship. In order to dissolve their doubts, they request the great ascetic Bhṛgu to go to the gods and convince himself personally which of them is the best. Accordingly Bhṛgu at first repairs to the mountain Kailāsa to visit Śiva, and is announced by Śiva's janitor Nandin. But Śiva is just enjoying the love of his wife, and does not admit the Ṛṣi at all. Thus insulted, the Ṛṣi pronounces a curse on Śiva, condemning him to take on the shape of the generative organs,¹ and to be worshipped not by Brahmans, but only by heretics. Thereupon Bhṛgu goes to the world of Brahman. The god is seated upon his lotus-throne, surrounded by the gods. The Ṛṣi bows before him in reverential silence, but filled with pride, Brahman does not even rise to greet him and to honour him as a guest. Spurred to anger Bhṛgu pronounces a curse whereby Brahman is to enjoy no worship at all from the human race.² The saint now goes to the mountain Mandara in Viṣṇu's world. There he sees the god reposing upon the world-snake, while Lakṣmī caresses his feet. He awakens the god roughly by a kick on his chest. Viṣṇu awakens, gently strokes the sage's foot, and declares that he feels highly gratified and honoured by the touch of his foot. He and his wife hasten to rise, and do honour to the Ṛṣi with divine garlands, sandalwood oil, etc. Then the great ascetic bursts into tears of joy, bows before the 'treasury of mercy', and praises Viṣṇu as the highest god, when he exclaims : "Thou alone shalt be worshipped by the Brahmans, none other of the gods is worthy of worship. They shall not be worshipped, Brahman, Śiva and the other gods, for they are charged with passion (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*) : thou alone, endowed with the quality of goodness (*sattva*), shalt be worshipped by the first-born (*i.e.*, the Brahmans). Let him who honours other gods, be counted among the heretics." Then Bhṛgu returns to the assembly of the Ṛṣis and tells them the result of his visit to the gods.³

A kind of appendix to the Uttarakhaṇḍa is formed by the *Kriyāyogasāra*,⁴ *i.e.*, 'the essence of Yoga by works', which

¹ This refers to the worship of the Yoni and the Liṅga as symbols of the god Śiva.

² This is an allusion to the fact that there is scarcely any cult of Brahman in India.

³ In the Bengali recension this legend is found in the middle, in the ĀnSS edition at the end of the Uttara-khaṇḍa, which contains only 174 Adhyāyas in the Bengali recension, but 282 in the edition.

⁴ Many extracts from this book which is mentioned in the list of Upapurāṇas, *Bṛhaddharma-Purāṇa*, 25, 24, have been translated into German by A. E. Wollheim da

teaches that Viṣṇu should be worshipped not by meditation (*dhyānayoga*), but by pious acts, above all by pilgrimages to the Ganges and the celebration of the festivals dedicated to Viṣṇu. In evidence of the fact that the fulfilment of all possible desires can be attained by worshipping Viṣṇu on the bank of the Ganges, many silly legends are told, but also the beautiful love story of Mādhava and Sulocanā.¹

It is quite impossible to say anything definite as to the date of the *Padma-Purāṇa*. It is obviously a rather loose compilation, the parts of which belong to totally different periods, and are probably many centuries apart. The common characteristic of the five or six books is merely their rigidly sectarian character, for all of them inculcate the cult of Viṣṇu.² Moreover, all these books contain references to fairly modern aspects of the Viṣṇu cult, such as the adoration of Rādhā as a goddess, the sanctity of the Śalagrāma stone, of the Tulsī plant, and the like. The latest portions are certainly later than the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, which belongs to the latest works of Purāṇa literature. Nevertheless there is sure to be an ancient nucleus at least in the *Sṛṣṭi*, *Bhūmi*, *Svarga* and *Pātāla Khaṇḍas*. It remains the task of future research to extract this ancient nucleus.³

III. The *Vaiṣṇava* or *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*.⁴ This is the main work of the Vaiṣṇavas or Viṣṇu-worshippers, and is frequently quoted as an authority by the philosopher Rāmānuja, the founder of the Viṣṇuite sect of the Rāmānujas, in his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*. In this work Viṣṇu is praised and glorified as the highest being, as the one and only god, with whom Brahman and Śiva are one, and as the creator and preserver of the world. Yet it is precisely this

Fonseca, *Mythologie des alten Indien*, Berlin, s. a. The same scholar has given an analysis of the book in the *Jahresbericht der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 1846, pp. 153 ff.

¹ Freely rendered into German verse by A. F. Graf von Schack, *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 156 ff.

² The *Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa* where Brahman is in the foreground, is an exception.

³ An essential preliminary for this would be a critical edition of the *Padma-Purāṇa* on the basis of the Bengali manuscripts.

⁴ Edited, with Ratnagarbha's commentary, Bombay 1824. An older commentary is that of Śrīdhara, from which Ratnagarbha has copied, s. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, p. 1310. Translated by H. H. Wilson, London 1840 (and *Works*, Vols. VI-X) and by Manmatha Nath Dutt, Calcutta, 1894.

Purāṇa which lacks all references to special feasts, sacrifices and ceremonies dedicated to Viṣṇu ; not even Viṣṇu-temples are mentioned, nor places sacred to Viṣṇu. This already leads to an assumption of the great antiquity of the work. The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, too, approaches the most closely to the old definition of Purāṇa (see above p. 458), containing but little that is not included in those 'five characteristics'. Its character is more that of a unified composition than that of a mere compilation, which is the case with most of the other Purāṇas. The fact that the title '*Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*' was hardly adopted at all for later works, *Mahātmyas* and such like,¹ likewise indicates that we are here dealing with a work of the earlier Purāṇa literature, which, on the whole, at least, has been preserved in its original form.²

A more detailed summary of the contents of this Purāṇa will best serve to give the reader an idea of the contents and significance of the Purāṇas altogether.

The work, which consists of six sections, begins with a dialogue between Parāśara, the grandson of Vasiṣṭha, and his pupil Maitreya. The latter asks his teacher about the origin and nature of the universe. To this Parāśara replies that this question reminds him of that which he had once heard from his grandfather Vasiṣṭha ; and he prepares to repeat that which he had heard. Contrary to the tradition (occurring, moreover, in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* itself), which ascribes all the Purāṇas to Vyāsa, Parāśara is here directly called the *author* of the work. After he has first glorified Viṣṇu in a hymn, he gives an account of the *creation of the*

¹ Aufrecht CC., I, 591 ; II, 140 ; III, 124, mentions only a few stotras and minor texts which claim to be parts of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that *Matsya-* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* give the number of ślokas of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* as 23,000, while in reality it has not quite 7,000 verses, and that also a '*Great Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*' (*Brhadviṣṇupurāṇa*, Aufrecht, CC., I, 591) is quoted.

² It is no more possible to assign any definite date to the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* than it is for any other Purāṇa. Pargiter (*Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, p. 80) may be right in thinking that it cannot be earlier than the 5th century A.D. However, I do not think that it is much later. Cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 143. C. V. Vaidya (*History of Mediaeval Hindu India*, I, Poona, 1921, pp. 350 ff. ; JBRAS., 1925, 1, pp. 155 ff.) endeavours to prove that the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* is not earlier than the 9th century, for he assumes that the Kailakila or Kaiñkila Yavanas mentioned in IV, 24 reigned in Andhra between 575 and 900 A.D., and were at the height of their power about 782 A.D. This assumption is, however, purely hypothetical and not proved.

world, as it recurs, fairly uniformly, in most of the Purāṇas.¹ Philosophical views, essentially belonging to the Sāṅkhya philosophy, are here in a remarkable manner mingled with popular mythical ideas, for which we can find many parallels among primitive peoples.

Attached to the account of the creation of the gods and demons, of the heroes and the primal ancestors of the human race, are numerous mythological narratives, allegories and legends of ancient kings and sages of primeval times. We have already become acquainted with many of these narratives in the *Mahābhārata*; thus that of the *twirling of the ocean*.² There is here a particularly poetical description of the goddess of Fortune and Beauty, *Śrī*, arising in radiant beauty out of the twirled milk-ocean, and throwing herself on Viṣṇu's breast. In a splendid hymn she is glorified and invoked by Indra as the mother of all beings, as the source of all that is good and beautiful, and as the giver of all happiness. Just as this piece serves, above all, for the glorification of *Viṣṇu*, whose wife *Śrī* is, so it is in all the other narratives always Viṣṇu, whose praise is sung in an extravagant manner. In the description of the power which can be gained by the worship of Viṣṇu, Indian fancy knows no bounds. One example is the myth of the prince *Dhruva*, who, vexed by the preference shown to his brother, entirely gives himself up, still as a boy, to austerities and Viṣṇu-worship, so that Viṣṇu finds himself compelled to grant him his wish of becoming something higher than his brother, and even than his father; he makes him the Pole-star, which is higher and of greater constancy than all the other stars of the heavens.³ The power of faith in Viṣṇu, however, finds its most magnificent expression in the legend of the boy *Prahlāda* (I, 17-20), whom his father, the proud demon-king *Hiraṇyakaśipu*, in vain tries to dissuade

¹ A summary of the accounts of the creation in the Purāṇas is given by Wilhelm Jahn, *Über die kosmogonischen Grundanschauungen im Mānava-Dharma-Sāstram*. Diss., Leipzig, 1904.

² See above, p. 342. A collection of all the passages that are common to the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* is given by A. Holtzmann, *Mahābhārata*, IV, 36 ff.

³ I, 11 f. A more detailed version of the myth is to be found in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (IV. 8 f.); on this is based the poem by Schack, *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 189 ff.

from his Viṣṇu-worship. No weapon can kill him, neither snakes nor wild elephants, neither fire nor poison nor magic spells can harm him. Hurlled down from the balcony of the palace, he falls gently on the bosom of the earth. He is thrown fettered into the ocean, and mountains are piled upon him—but on the floor of the ocean he sings a hymn to Viṣṇu, his fetters drop off, and he hurls the mighty hills from him. Questioned by his father whence his marvellous powers are derived, Prahlāda replies :

“Whatever power I possess, father, is neither the result of magic rites, nor is it inseparable from my nature ; it is no more than that which is possessed by all in whose hearts Acyuta¹ abides. He who meditates not of wrong to others, but considers them as himself, is free from the effects of sin, inasmuch as the cause does not exist ; but he who inflicts pain upon others, in act, thought, or speech, sows the seed of future birth, and the fruit that awaits him after birth is pain. I wish no evil to any, and do and speak no offence ; for I behold Keśava² in all beings, as in my own soul. Whence should corporeal or mental suffering or pain, inflicted by elements or the gods, affect me, whose heart is thoroughly purified by him ? Love, then, for all creatures will be assiduously cherished by all those who are wise in the knowledge that Hari³ is in all things.”³

Books II of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* first gives (Chaps. 1-12) a fantastic description of the world. The seven continents and the seven oceans are described, in the midst of which is situated Jambudvīpa with the golden mountain Meru, the dwelling of the gods. In Jambudvīpa is Bharatavarṣa, i.e., ‘India’, whose lands, mountains and rivers are enumerated. After this description of the earth follows a description of Pātāla, the nether world, in which the snake-gods dwell ; next follow an enumeration and description of the still deeper-situated Narakas or hells. As a contrast there now follows a description of the heavenly spheres, the sun, the chariot of the sun and the sun-horses, with astronomical expositions on the sun’s course, the planetary system, and the sun as giver of rain and preserver of beings. Next follows a description of the moon, of its car, its horses, its course,

¹ Names of Viṣṇu.

² Also a name of Viṣṇu.

³ I, 19, 1—9. Translated by H. H. Wilson. A version of the same legend is found in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, VII, 4-6, on which the poetical rendering by Schack. *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 1 ff. is based.

and its relation to the sun and planets. The section concludes with the statement that the whole world is but Viṣṇu, and that he alone is the only reality.

In connection with the name Bharata-varṣa there is then related (Chaps. 13-16) a legend of king *Bharata* of old,¹ which however, only serves as an introduction to a philosophical dialogue in which the ancient *doctrine of the Unity of All*, familiar from the Upaniṣads, is presented from the Viṣṇuite standpoint. The style of the whole section recalls that of the Upaniṣads in many respects. The substance of the legend is as follows :

King Bharata was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu. One day he went to bathe in the river. While he was bathing, a pregnant antelope came out of the forest to drink. At the same moment there was heard in close proximity, the loud roar of a lion. The antelope is startled, and, with a mighty leap, darts away. In consequence of her leap, her young one is born and she herself dies. Bharata took the young one with him and reared it in his hermitage. From that time onwards nothing but the antelope concerned him. She was his one thought, his one care. And when at last, still thinking only of the antelope, he died, he was soon afterwards born again as an antelope, but with the remembrance of his former existence. In this antelope-existence also, he worshipped Viṣṇu and practised austerities, so that, in his next birth, he came into the world as the son of a pious Brahman. Although, as such, he had acquired the highest knowledge, the doctrine of the unity of all, yet he troubled about no Veda-study, performed no brahmanical rites, spoke disconnectedly and ungrammatically, went about dirty and in torn garments—in short he behaved absolutely like an idiot.² He was universally despised, and employed in the low work of a slave. Thus it happened that he was once employed by a servant of king Sauvīra as the king's palanquin-bearer. On this occasion a conversation takes place between the apparent idiot and the king, in which Bharata soon reveals himself as a great sage, and

¹ Cf. E. Leumann, *Die Bharata Sage*, ZDMG., 48, 1894, pp. 65 ff., and August Blau, *Das Bharatopākhyāna des Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* ('Beiträge zur Bückerkunde und Philologie August Wilmanus zum' 25 März 1903 gewidmet, Leipzig, 1903, p. 205 ff.)

² The corresponding story in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, V, 9; 10 has the title *Jaḍabharata-carita*, 'Life of Bharata the Idiot', in the colophons. Jaḍabharata is mentioned, along with Durvāsas, Rbhu Nidāgha and other Paramahansa ascetics, who 'though not mad, behave like madmen', in the *Jābāla-Upaniṣad* 6. In *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* I, 9 a legend is related of the ascetic Durvāsas (i.e., 'Badly Clad') 'who observed the vow of a madman'. Cf. also A. Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 83. Similarly, there were in the Middle Ages certain Christian saints, like St. Symeon Salos and St. Andreas, who wandered about like fools or idiots, exposing themselves to mockery and insults as a kind of asceticism. Cf. H. Reich, *Der Mimus*, Berlin, 1903, I, 2, p. 822 f., and J. Horowitz, *Spuren griechischer Mimen im Orient*, Berlin, 1905, pp. 34 ff.



to the great joy of the king, reveals to him the doctrine of the unity of all. In elucidation of this he tells him the story of *Ṛbhu and Nidāgha* :

The wise and holy *Ṛbhu*, son of the creator *Brahman*, had been the teacher of *Nidāgha*. After a thousand years he once visited his pupil, was hospitably entertained by him, and was asked where he dwelt, whence he came, and where he was going. *Ṛbhu* answered him that these were quite unreasonable questions, for man (namely, the *ātman*) is everywhere, for him there is no going and no coming, and he makes the doctrine of the unity so clear to him that *Nidāgha*, enraptured, falls at his feet and asks who he is. Only now does he learn that it is his old teacher *Ṛohu* who had come in order to teach him the true wisdom once again. After another thousand years *Ṛbhu* again comes to the town where *Nidāgha* lives. There he observes a crowd of people and a king, who is entering the city with a great retinue. Far away from the crowd stands his former pupil *Nidāgha*. *Ṛbhu* approaches him and asks him why he thus stands apart. Thereupon *Nidāgha* replies : "A king is entering this city, there is a great crush, therefore I stand aside." *Ṛbhu* asks : "Which then, is the king ?" *Nidāgha* : "The king is he who sits on the great stately elephant." "It is well," says *Ṛbhu*, "but who is the elephant and who is the king ?" *Nidāgha* : "The elephant is below and the king is above. *Ṛbhu* : "Now, what is the meaning of below and what is the meaning of above ?" Then *Nidāgha* jumps on the back of *Ṛbhu* and says, "I am above like the king, thou art below like the elephant." "Very well," says *Ṛbhu*, "but now tell me, my dear one, *which of us two art thou and which am I ?*" Only now does *Nidāgha* recognise his old teacher *Ṛohu*, for nobody is so filled with the doctrine of unity as *he*. Then the doctrine of the unity of the universe was so deeply impressed on *Nidāgha* that from now on he looked on all beings as one with himself, and attained complete liberation.

Book III of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* begins with an account of the *Manus* (primal ancestors of the human race) and the ages (*manvantaras*)¹ over which they ruled. Then follows a discussion on the four *Vedas*, on their division by *Vyāsa* and his pupils, and on the origin of the various Vedic schools. Then comes an enumeration of the eighteen *Purāṇas* and a list of all sciences.

Then the question is raised and discussed, how one may attain to liberation as a devout *Viṣṇu*-worshipper. In a beautiful dialogue (Chap. 7) between *Yama*, the god of death, and

¹ On the Ages of the World according to the *Purāṇas* s. *Jacobi*, *ERE.*, I, 200 ff.

one of his servants, it is explained that he who is pure in heart and leads a virtuous life and has directed his mind to Viṣṇu, is a true Viṣṇu-worshipper and therefore is free from the bonds of the god of death. This is followed by an exposition on the duties of the castes and āśramas, on birth and marriage ceremonies, ritual ablutions, the daily sacrifices, the duties of hospitality, conduct at meals, and so on. A long treatise (Chaps. 13-17) on the funeral oblations and ceremonies for the worshipping of spirits of ancestors (*śrāddhas*) concludes this section, in which the Vedic-brahmanical religious custom are represented as the right kind of Viṣṇu-worship. The last two chapters of the book describe the origin of the heretical sects hostile to the Veda, whose adherents, especially the Jains, called *Digambara*, and the Buddhists known as 'Red-mantles' (*Raktāmbaras*),¹ are represented as the worst evil-doers. In order to show how sinful it is to have any sort of intercourse with such heretics, the story of the ancient king *Śatadhanu* (Chap. 18) is told, who otherwise was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu, but once, out of mere politeness, exchanged a few words with a heretic, and in consequence was re-born consecutively as a dog, jackal, wolf, vulture, crow and peacock, till at last—thanks to the constant faithfulness and piety of his wife *Śaibyā*—he again came into the world as a king.

Book IV of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* contains chiefly genealogical lists of the ancient royal races, of the solar dynasty, which traces its origin back to the sun-god, and the lunar dynasty, which traces its origin to the moon-god. Long lists of ancient kings—many of them purely mythical, some probably historical—are only occasionally interrupted in order to relate some legend about one or other of them. The marvellous plays a great part in all these legends. There is Dakṣa, who is born out of Brahman's right thumb; Manu's daughter Ilā, who becomes transformed into a man; Ikṣvāku, who owes his existence to the sneezing of Manu; King Raivata, who,

¹ The rise of the heretical sects is here (III, 17 f.) explained by the legend according to which Viṣṇu sent a phantom figure to the demons in order to alienate them from the Veda religion, whereupon they can be defeated by the gods. Cf. *Padma-Purāṇa*, above, pp. 470 ff.



with his daughter Revati, goes to heaven, in order to have a husband for his daughter recommended to him by god Brahman;¹ or indeed King Yuvanaśva, who becomes pregnant and brings a son into the world, whom Indra suckles with the drink of immortality, the child putting his finger into the mouth of the god and then sucking it. Because Indra said: 'He will be suckled by me' (*mān dhāsyati*), the child received the name *Māndhātṛ*. The latter became a powerful king and the father of three sons and fifty daughters. How he acquires a son-in-law, is related, with that peculiar humour which occasionally makes a pleasant break in the deep earnestness which usually prevails in the Indian legends of saints, in the legend of the pious ascetic *Saubhari*, who practises asceticism in the water for twelve years, until the sight of a fish-king enjoying himself with his young ones, awakens in him the desire for paternal joys.²

In this book we meet with many legends already familiar from the epics, for example, those of Purūravas and Urvaśi,³ of Yayāti, and others. There is also here a short summary of the Rāma-legend. There is an account of the birth of the Pāṇḍavas, and of Kṛṣṇa, and the story of the *Mahābhārata* is briefly touched upon. The conclusion of this extensive genealogical book is formed by prophecies concerning the 'future' kings of Magadha, the Śaiśunāgas, Nandas, Mauryas, Śuṅgas, Kāṇvāyanas and Andhrabhṛtyas (see above pp. 459 f.), concerning the foreign barbarian rulers who will succeed them, and the terrible age brought about by them, an age without religion and without morality, which will only be ended by Viṣṇu in his incarnation as Kalki.

Book V is a complete whole in itself. It contains a detailed biography of the divine cowherd Kṛṣṇa in which practically the same adventures are told in the same order as in the *Harivaṃśa*.⁴

Book VI is quite short. Once again the four consecutive

¹ IV, 1. A poetical rendering by Schack, *Stimmen vom Ganges*, pp. 120 ff.

² IV, 2. A poetical rendering by Schack, *loc. cit.*, pp. 87 ff.

³ Translated by Geldner, *Vedische Studien*, I, pp. 253 ff.

⁴ See above, pp. 392 ff. This chapter has been translated into German by A. Paul, *Krishnas Weltengang*, Munich, 1905.

ages of the world (*yugas*)—Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali—are recalled, and the evil Kaliyuga is described in the form of a prophecy, to which is attached a presentation of the various kinds of dissolution (*pralaya*) of the universe. Next are described in a pessimistic manner (Chap. 5) the evils of existence, the pain of being born, of childhood, of manhood, old age and death, the torments of hell and the imperfection of the bliss of heaven, and from this the conclusion is drawn that only liberation from existence, freedom from re-birth, is the highest happiness. But for this it is necessary to know the nature of God; for only *that* wisdom is perfect by which God is seen, all else is ignorance. The medium for obtaining this wisdom is *Yoga*, meditation upon Viṣṇu. The two penultimate chapters of the work give information on this medium. The last chapter recapitulates briefly the contents of the whole Purāṇa and ends with a praise of Viṣṇu and a final prayer.

IV. The *Vāyava* or *Vāyu-Purāṇa*.¹ This appears in some lists under the name of *Śaiva* or *Śiva-Purāṇa*,² a title which is given to the work because it is dedicated to the worship of the god Śiva. A 'Purāṇa proclaimed by the Wind-god', *i.e.*, a *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, is quoted in the *Mahābhārata* as well as in the *Harivaṃśa*, and the *Harivaṃśa* in many cases agrees literally with our *Vāyu-Purāṇa*.³ It has already been mentioned (see above, p. 461) that the poet Bāṇa (about 625 A.D.) had a *Vāyu-Purāṇa* read to him, and that in this Purāṇa the rule of the Guptas is described as it was in the 4th century A.D. There certainly existed an ancient Purāṇa under this name, and undoubtedly there is still preserved in our texts much of the ancient work, which is probably not later than the 5th century A.D.⁴ This work also deals with

¹ Editions in *Bibl. Ind.*, 1880-1889 and in *ĀṇSS* No. 49, 1905.

² Thus in the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. But there is also a *Śiva-Purāṇa*, which is quite a different work and belongs to the Upapurāṇas. It consists of 12 Samhitās, including a *Vāyaviya* and a *Dharma-Samhitā*. Cf. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1311 ff. The *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa* also is called *Vāyaviya*, 'proclaimed by Vāyu', and Pargiter (*ERE.*, X, 448) believes that Vāyu and *Brahmāṇḍa* were originally *one* Purāṇa and only differentiated later.

³ Cf. Hopkins, *Great Epic*, p. 49. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, IV, pp. 40 f. and above, pp. 457 ff.

⁴ Cf. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., p. 47, Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 145. C. V. Vaidya's argument (*JBRAS.*, 1925, 1, pp. 155 f.) for ascribing the *Vāyu-Purāṇa* to the 8th century is not convincing.



the same subjects, characteristic of the ancient Purāṇas—creation of the world, genealogies, etc., as the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*. Only here the legends which are related serve for the glorification of Śiva, not of Viṣṇu. Like the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, so also the *Vāyu-Purāṇa* in its last part gives a description of the end of the world, and deals with the efficacy of Yoga, but ends with a description of the splendour of Śivapura, 'the city of Śiva', where the Yogin arrives who has entirely lost himself in meditation upon Śiva. Even in this Śivaite work two chapters are devoted to Viṣṇu.¹ The Purāṇa deals in detail with the fathers (*pitṛs*) and their cult by means of Śrāddhas.² One chapter is devoted to the art of songs.³ The Gayāmāhātmya printed at the end of the editions is certainly a later edition.⁴ There are also other Māhātmyas, Stotras and ritual-texts, which claim to belong to the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*.

V. The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. This is indisputably that work of Purāṇa literature which is most famous in India. Still to-day it exerts a powerful influence on the life and thought of the innumerable adherents of the sect of the Bhāgavatas (worshippers of Viṣṇu under the name of 'Bhagavat'). The extremely numerous manuscripts and prints of the text itself, as well as of many commentaries on the whole work and of separate explanatory writings on parts of it,⁵ in addition to the many translations into Indian vernaculars,⁶ bear witness to the enormous popularity and the extraordinary reputation of the work in India. It is in accordance with this its significance, that it is that first Purāṇa that has been edited and translated in Europe.⁷ Nevertheless

¹ Adhyāyas 96, 97.

² Śrāddhaprakriyārambha and Śrāddhakalpa, Adhy. 71-86.

³ Adhy. 87: gītālaṃkāranirdeśaḥ.

⁴ Adhy. 104-112. It is missing in some MSS. and appears as an independent text in MSS. as well as in Indian prints.

⁵ See Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1259 ff., and Aufrecht, *CC.*, I, pp. 401 ff.

⁶ In Bengali alone there are 40 translations, especially of the Kṛṣṇa-book. See D. Ch. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta, 1911, pp. 220 ff.

⁷ *Le Bhāgavata Purāṇa ou histoire poétique de Kṛichṇa*, traduit et publié par M. Eugène Burnouf, t. 1-III, Paris 1840-47. T. IV. et V publiés par M. Hauvette-Besnault et P. Roussel, Paris, 1884 et 1898. A few legends from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* has been translated into French by A. Roussel, *Légendes Morales de l'Inde.*, Paris 1900, I, 1 ff. and II, 215 ff. English translation by Manmatha Nath Dutt, Calcutta, 1895. A French translation of

it belongs to the later productions of Purāṇa literature. In contents it is closely connected with the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, with which it often agrees literally, and it is undoubtedly dependent upon the latter. Even in India doubts as to the 'genuineness' of the Bhāgavata as one of the ancient eighteen Purāṇas 'composed by Vyāsa' have already been expressed, and there are polemic treatises¹ discussing the question whether the Bhāgavata—or the *Devībhāgavata-Purāṇa*,² a Śivaite work, belong to the 'eighteen Purāṇas'. In this connection the question is raised and discussed whether the grammarian Vopadeva is the author of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*.³ Rather hastily Colebrooke, Burnouf and Wilson have concluded from this, that Vopadeva really was the author of the Purāṇa, and therefore that it only originated in the 13th century.⁴ In any case the work cannot possibly be as late as that, as it already passed as a sacred book in the 13th century.⁵ There are good grounds for assigning it to the 10th century A.D.⁶ Rāmānuja (12th century) did not

the Tamil version of the Bhāgavata was published as early as 1788 at Paris, and this was rendered into German, Zürich, 1791 (s. Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-philologie*, pp. 47 f.).

¹ Thus the 'box on the ear for villains' (*durjanamukhacapeṭikā*), the 'big box on the ear for villains' (*durjanamukhamahācapeṭikā*) and the 'slipper in the face of villains' (*durjanamukhapadmapādukā*). They are translated by Burnouf, *loc. cit.*, I, Préface pp. lix ff. These are quite modern writings.

² This is also called simply *Śrībhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa* in the MSS. Editions have been published in Bombay, and an English translation in the SBH. Cf. Aufrecht, *Bedl. Cat.*, pp. 79 ff.; Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, p. 1207 f. There is also a *Mahā-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* differing from it, which is described by Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1280 ff.) as "an apocryphal Purāṇa recounting the story and exploits of Devī and urging her claims to being worshipped as the supreme deity."

³ This supposition seems to rest only on the fact that Vopadeva is the author of the *Muktāphala*, a work dependent on the Bhāgavata, and of the *Harillā*, an Anukramaṇi (index) to the Bhāgavata.

⁴ Vopadeva was a contemporary of Hemādri, who lived between 1260 and 1309.

⁵ Ānandatīrtha Madhva (1199-1278), who himself wrote a commentary on the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* places it on a level with the *Mahābhārata*.

⁶ C. V. Vaidya (JBRAS., 1925, 1, pp. 144 ff.) makes it seem probable that it is later than Śaṅkara (beginning of the 9th century) and earlier than Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* (12th century). Bhandarkar (*Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., p. 49) says that it "must have been composed at least two centuries before Ānandatīrtha." Pargiter (*Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, p. 80) places it 'about the ninth century A.D.', Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 229 ff.) about 900 A. D., C. Eliot (*Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 188 note) remarks that "it does not belong to the latest class of Purāṇas, for it seems to contemplate the performance of Smārta rites, not temple ceremonial." Vaidya (*loc. cit.*, pp. 157 f.) adduces arguments for the hypothesis that the author of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* lived in the land of the Dravidas. Cf. Grierson, JRAS., 1911, pp. 800 f.

yet recognise the Bhāgavata as an authority, for he does not mention it, and only alludes to the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*. But though it may have originated at a comparatively late date, it certainly utilised very ancient materials. Moreover, it is the one Purāṇa which, more than any other of the others, bears the stamp of a unified composition, and deserves to be appreciated as a literary production on account of its language, style and metre.¹

The work is divided into twelve books (*skandhas*) and consists of about 18,000 ślokas. The cosmogonic myths agree on the whole with those of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, but in some interesting details also differ from it.² The incarnations of Viṣṇu are described in detail, especially that as a wild boar. It is remarkable that *Kapila*, the founder of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, is also mentioned as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and (at the end of *Book III*) himself recites a long exposition on Yoga. Buddha, too, already appears among the incarnations of Viṣṇu.³ The legends which are told for the glorification of Viṣṇu are numerous. Most of them, like those of Dhruva, Prahlāda, and so on, are the same as are already familiar to us from the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*. With the *Mahābhārata*, too, the work has much in common; a few verses from the *Bhagavad-gītā* are quoted literally.⁴ The Śakuntalā episode is related in IX, 20, in quite a short extract, but probably after a very ancient source.⁵ *Book X* is the most popular and the most frequently read of all. It contains the biography of *Kṛṣṇa* which is here given in much greater detail than in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and in the *Harivaṃśa*. In particular the love scenes with the cowherdresses (*gopīs*) occupy a much

¹ Side by side with the śloka, metres of ornate poetry also appear. Cf. Burnouf, I, Préface, pp. cv. f.

² See A. Roussel, *Cosmologie Hindoue d'après le Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, Paris, 1898.

³ Though he appears, 'to delude the foes of the gods' (I, 3, 24), he is among the avatāras and as such (in the Nārāyaṇavarman, VI, 8, 17) he is invoked, whilst in the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (III, pp. 17 f.), Viṣṇu in order to delude the Daityas, causes a phantom form to issue forth from himself, which comes into the world as Buddha.

⁴ See Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, IV, 41-49, and J. E. Abbott, *Ind. Ant.*, 21, 1892, p. 94.

⁵ In IX, 20, 16, *om* is used in the sense of 'yes', which is very archaic. Cf. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII, 18; *Chāṇḍogya-Up.*, I, 1, 8 and above p. 185, note. In *Kurma-Purāṇa*, I, 23 (p. 248) and I, 27 (p. 294) *om* is also used in the sense of 'yes' in the style of the old legends, though the *Kūrma* itself is a late work.

larger space.¹ This book is translated into almost all the Indian vernaculars and is a favourite book with all classes of the Indian people. The annihilation of the Yādavas and the death of Kṛṣṇa are related in *Book XI*, while the last book contains the usual prophecies concerning the Kaliyuga and the destruction of the world.

VI. The *Bṛhannāradya-Purāṇa*, i.e., 'the great Purāṇa of Nārada'. It is generally so called to distinguish it from the Nārada—or Nāradya—Upapurāṇa. It is doubtful, however, whether even the *Bṛhannāradya-Purāṇa*² deserves to be counted among the ancient Purāṇas; for it is a purely sectarian text, wherein the Sūta repeats a conversation between Nārada and Sanatkumāra, and the sage Nārada appears in the character of a teacher of Viṣṇu-bhakti, the pious adoration of Viṣṇu. The real themes of the Purāṇas, the creation of the world, etc., are not touched upon; the main themes are descriptions of the feasts and ceremonies of the Viṣṇu-cult, illustrated by all manner of legends. Inserted in the legends we also find didactic sections upholding a rather intolerant brahmanical standpoint. Chapter XIV, a lengthy chapter containing a catalogue of the principal sins and the corresponding punishments of hell, is characteristic.

By way of example, the following are included among the sinners for whom there is no atonement, and who must irrevocably be condemned to hell: He who venerates a Liṅga or an image of Viṣṇu which is worshipped by a Śūdra or a woman; he who bows down before a Liṅga worshipped by a heretic, or who himself becomes a heretic. Śūdras, uninitiated persons, women, outcastes, who touch an image of Viṣṇu or Śiva, go to hell. He who hates a Brahman, can in no wise hope for atonement. There is no expiation for the Brahman who enters a Buddhist temple, even though he did so in a great emergency; even hundreds of expiation ceremonies are of no avail. The Buddhists are despisers of the Vedas, and

¹ Rādhā, however, does not appear, from which Vaidya, loc. cit., rightly concludes that the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* is earlier than the *Gitagovinda*.

² Edited by Pandit Hrishīkeśa Śāstrī, *Bibl. Ind.*, 1891, who calls the work an Upapurāṇa. Cf. Wilson, *Works*, VI, pp. li. ff.; Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1208 ff. In the *Bṛhaddharma-Purāṇa* I, 25, 23 both the *Bṛhannāradya* and the *Nāradya* are enumerated among the *Upapurāṇas*.

therefore a Brahman shall not look at them, if he is truly devoted to the Vedas.¹ These sinners for whom there is no expiation, are not only condemned to roast in hell for hundreds and thousands of years—the author actually revels in the enumeration of the tortures of hell—but they are subsequently reborn again and again as worms and other animals, as Cāṇḍālas, Śūdras and Mlecchas. Dreadful torments of hell await him who recites the Veda in the presence of women or Śūdras. Nevertheless, in contradiction to all these damnations, the same chapter teaches that Viṣṇu-bhakti annihilates all sins, and that Ganges water, too, washes away the blackest sins.

Several chapters (22-28) deal in detail with the duties of the castes and āśramas, and with Śrāddhas and the ceremonies of expiation (*prāyaścitta*). The last chapters deal with the misery of transmigration (*saṃsāra*) and with salvation (*mokṣa*) by means of Yoga and Bhakti. Devotion to Viṣṇu is again and again declared to be the only means of salvation. Thus we read (28, 116): “Of what avail are the Vedas, the Śāstras, ablutions in sacred bathing-places, or austerities and sacrifices, to those who are without the worship of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇubhakti) ?”

The *Nāradya-Upapurāṇa* includes the Rukmāṅgadacarita, which also occurs as an independent book. The ‘edifying’ legend of King Rukmāṅgada is here told in 40 chapters. King Rukmāṅgada has promised his daughter Mohini that he will grant her a wish, whatsoever it may be. She demands that he shall either break his fast on the Ekādaśī (the eleventh day of the half-month sacred to Viṣṇu) or slay his son; the king decides upon the latter, this being the lesser of the two sins.

VII. The *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*.² This is one of the most important, most interesting, and probably one of the oldest works of the whole Purāṇa literature. Yet even this Purāṇa is no unified work, but consists of parts which vary in value and probably belong to different periods.

¹ Pandit Hrishīkeśa concludes from this passage that the work was compiled when Buddhism ‘was rooted out and was universally despised’. I think, on the contrary, that such violent outbreaks against the Buddhists could only have a meaning at a time when Buddhism was still a living power in India.”

² Edited by K. M. Banerjee, *Bibl. Ind.*, 1862 and translated into English by F. Eden Pargiter, *Bibl. Ind.*, 1888-1905.

The work takes its name from the ancient sage Mārkaṇḍeya, who enjoyed eternal youth, and who also appears in a large section of the *Mahābhārata* (see above p. 349 Note 4 and pp. 373-74) as a narrator. We may probably regard those sections as the oldest,¹ in which Mārkaṇḍeya is actually the speaker and instructs his pupil Krauṣṭuki upon the creation of the world, the ages of the world, the genealogies and the other subjects peculiar to the Purāṇas. Special evidence for the great antiquity of these sections which contain the *old* Purāṇa is found in the circumstance that in them neither Viṣṇu nor Śiva occupies a prominent position, that, on the other hand, Indra and Brahman are much in the foreground, and that the ancient deities of the Veda, Agni (Fire) and Sūrya (Sun) are glorified by hymns in a few of the cantos, and that a large number of sun-myths are related.² This oldest part of the Purāṇa, as Pargiter considers, may belong to the third century A.D., but may perhaps be earlier. A large part of this section also consists of moral and edifying narratives.

This is still more the case in the first sections of the work, which are closely connected with the *Mahābhārata* and have very much in common with the character of *Book XII* of the epic. The Purāṇa actually commences with Jaimini, a pupil of Vyāsa, approaching Mārkaṇḍeya, and, after a few eulogies of the *Mahābhārata*,³ asking him for the answers to four questions, which the great epic leaves unanswered. The first question is, how it was that Draupadī was able to become the common wife of the five Pāṇḍavas, and the last, why the children of Draupadī were killed at a youthful age.

¹ These are chapters 45-81 and 93-136 (conclusion). Cf. Pargiter, *Introd.*, p. iv. Verse 45, 64 is quoted twice by Śaṅkara (Vedānta-Sūtras I, 2, 23 and III, 3, 16, s. P. Deussen. *Die Sūtras des Vedānta aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt*, Leipzig, 1887, p. 119 and 570); but it is by no means certain that Śaṅkara knew the verse from the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, for he does not mention it, but only says 'It is said in the Smṛti'.

² Chapters 99-110. An impression of great antiquity is also created by the narrative of Dama who, in order to avenge the death of his father, cruelly kills Vapuṣmā and offers his flesh and blood to the spirit of his father, with the funeral cakes (136). The very fact that in the Bengali manuscripts the narrative ceases without any mention of the human sacrifice, is a proof of the great antiquity of traditions which could no longer be reconciled with the views of a later time. (Cf. Pargiter, p. vii.)

³ These partly agree literally with the praises at the beginning and end of the *Mahābhārata* itself (cf. above pp. 285 f. and 398).

Markaṇḍeya does not answer these questions himself, but refers him to four wise birds, in reality Brahman who were born as birds in consequence of a curse.¹ These tell Jaimini a series of legends in reply to the propounded questions. In reply to the last question it is related, how five angels (*viśve devās*) once took the liberty of finding fault with the great saint Viśvāmitra, when he treated King Hariścandra cruelly, for which they were cursed by the saint to be born again as human beings, which curse he mitigated so that they should die young and unmarried. The five sons of Draupadi were those angels. In connection with this is related the touching, but genuinely Brahmanical legend of King *Hariścandra*, who, through fear of the wrath and curse of Viśvāmitra, suffers endless sorrow and humiliation, until at last he is taken into heaven by Indra himself.²

After the answering of the four questions there begins a new section (Chaps. 10-44) in which a conversation between a father and his son is communicated ; this is a very lengthy amplification of the dialogue between father and son which we met with in the *Mahābhārata* (see above, pp. 367-70). It is significant that the son, in the *Mahābhārata*, is called 'Intelligent' (*Medhāvin*), while in the *Purāṇa* he bears the nickname *Jaḍa*, 'the Idiot'.³ As in the *Mahābhārata*, here too, the son despises the life of the pious Brahman, which his father places before him as an ideal, he recalls all his previous births and sees salvation only in an escape from the *Samsāra*. In connection with this the 'Idiot' gives a description of the *Samsāra* and of the consequences of sins in various rebirths,

¹ This is again a duplicate of a legend also occurring in the *Mahābhārata* (I, pp. 229 ff.), where, however, one of the birds is called Droṇa, while in the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* the four birds are Droṇa's sons.

² Chapters 7 and 8. The famous legend has been translated into English by J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, I, 3rd ed., pp. 379 ff. and by B. H. Wortham, JRAS., 1881, pp. 355 ff., into German by F. Rückert (ZDMG., 13, 1859, pp. 103 ff., *Rückert-Nachlese*, II, 489 ff.). The legend was a favourite theme for later dramatists, thus it forms the subject of the *Caṇḍakaśūka* by the poet Kṣemīśvara (10th or 11th century A.D.). It is also told in a ballad that is still popular in the Punjab, s. R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Punjab* No. 42 (Vol. III, pp. 53 ff.). The *Śunaḥśepa* legend, the Buddhist *Vessantara-Jātaka*, and the Hebrew Book of Job have been compared with the *Hariścandra* legend. Cf. Weber SBA., 1891, pp. 779 f.; *Ind. Stud.*, 15, pp. 413 ff. On the legends of Viśvāmitra, Viśiṣṭha, Hariścandra, and Śunaḥśepa and in the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Purāṇas* and *Epics*, s. F. E. Pargiter, JRAS., 1917, pp. 37 ff.

³ This 'wise fool' also, like *Jaḍabharata* (see above, p. 481) is a proclaimer of the Yoga.

and especially of the hells and the punishments of hell, which await the sinner. In the midst of this description of hell, magnificent of its kind, though not very enjoyable,¹ stands one of the gems of Indian legend poetry, the story of the noble king *Vipaścit* ('the Wise'),² which well deserves to be briefly reproduced here.

The extremely pious and virtuous king *Vipaścit* is, after his death, taken to hell by a servant of Yama. In answer to the king's amazed question as to why he should have to go to hell, Yama's servant explains to him that he once neglected to cohabit with his wife at the time suitable for conception, and he must atone for this light offence against the religious precepts, at least by a very short stay in hell. Thereupon he gives the king instruction upon good and bad deeds (*karman*), which must inevitably have their effects, and the punishments of hell which are laid down for every single sin. After these explanations the servant of the god of death is about to take him out of hell again. The king turns to go, when dreadful screams of agony smite on his ear, and the inhabitants of hell assail him with entreaties to stay only a minute longer, as an inexpressibly pleasant breath emanates from him, which alleviates the torments of hell which they are enduring. At his amazed question, Yama's servant gives him the explanation that, from the good works of a pious man, a refreshing breath is wafted towards the inhabitants of hell and alleviates their torments. Then says the king :

"Not in heaven, nor in Brahman's world, methinks,
Does man find such bliss as when
He can give refreshment to beings in torment.
If through my presence, the racking torture
Of these poor ones is alleviated,
Then will I stay here, my friend,
Like a post, I will not move from this spot."

Yama's servant spake :

"Come, O King, let us go, do *thou* enjoy
The fruits of thy good deeds and leave the torments
To those who, through bad deeds, deserve them."

The king spake :

"No, I will not go hence, while these
Poor dwellers in hell are happy through my presence.

¹ This is the most detailed description of hell in the Purāṇa literature, but similar descriptions also occur in other Purāṇas. They are discussed by L. Scherman, *Visionsliteratur*, pp. 23 ff., 45 ff.

² Chap. 15, Verses 47-79 translated into German by F. Rückert (ZDMG., 12, 1858, pp. 336 ff. ; *Rückert-Nachlese*, II, pp. 485 ff.).

A disgrace and a shame is the life of a man
 Who feels no pity for the tortured, poor ones,
 Who implore him for protection—even for bitter foes.
 Sacrifices, gifts, austerities serve neither here nor beyond
 For his salvation, who has no heart for protecting tortured ones,
 Whose heart is hardened to children, old men and the weak,
 Not as a man do I regard him—he is a devil.
 Even though, through the presence of these dwellers in hell
 I suffer the torment of purgatory, the stink of hell,
 And the pain of hunger and of thirst rob me of my senses—
 Yet I deem it sweeter than the joy of heaven,
 To give them, the tortured ones, protection and help.
 If through *my* suffering many unhappy ones become glad,
 What more do I want?—Do not tarry, depart and leave me.”
 “Behold ! *Dharma*¹ comes, and *Śakra*, to fetch thee hence.

Yama's servant spake :

Thou must go indeed, King : up, and away from here !”

Dharma spake :

“Let me lead thee to the heaven which thou hast well deserved ;
 Enter this chariot of the gods without delay—away from here !”

The King spake :

“Here in this hell, Dharma, men are tortured a thousandfold ;

‘Protect us !’ full of agony they cry to me ; I will not move from
 here !”

Śakra spake :

“The reward of their *deeds*, these evil ones receive in hell ;

Thou, prince, must for thy *good* deed ascend to heaven.”

But for the king the dwellers in hell are not sinners, only *sufferers*.
 And as, in answer to his question how great his good works are, Dharma
 himself replies that they are as numerous “as the drops of water in the
 sea, the stars in the heavens,.....the grains of sand in the Ganges,”
 he has only the *one* desire, that, through these good works of his, the
 dwellers in hell may be delivered from their torments. The king of gods
 grants him this wish, and as he ascends to heaven, all the inmates of hell
 are released from their pain.²

¹ On *Dharma* as the name of the god of death see above p. 349. *Śakra* is a name of *Indra*, the king of the gods. In genuine old *Ākhyāna*-style, it is *not related* that the two gods came there, but their coming is communicated in *conversation*, and they then immediately appear speaking.

² The story of Yudhiṣṭhira's visit to hell and ascent to heaven in *Book 18* of the *Mahābhārata* (s. above, pp. 374 f.) seems to me but a poor imitation of the *Vipaścīt* legend. The very fact that Yudhiṣṭhira only has a vision (*māyā*) of hell, (shows a considerable falling-off. In the *Pātāla-Khaṇḍa* of the *Padma-Purāṇa* (s. Wilson, Works, III, pp. 49 f., not in the *ĀnSS* edition) King Janaka goes to hell as a matter of form, because he has struck a cow, and he releases the damned souls in a similar fashion. A Jewish fairy-tale tells of a selfless man who spent his whole life in succouring the

In language and style this splendid dialogue reminds one very much of the Sāvitrī poem of the *Mahābhārata*. But just as in the great epic the most absurd productions of priestly literature stand by the side of the most beautiful poems, so also in our Purāṇa. Immediately after the above-told legend follows that of *Anasūyā*, which appears like a caricature of the Sāvitrī legend :

*Anasūyā*¹ is the extremely faithful wife of a loathsome, leprous, rough and vulgar Brahman. In accordance with the brahmanical principle : 'The husband is the deity of the wife', his wife tends him with the greatest love and care, and bears his coarseness with patience. One day the good man, who is also a libertine, expresses the urgent desire of visiting a courtesan who has excited his admiration. As he himself is too ill to go, his faithful wife takes him on her back, in order to carry him there. He then accidentally touches a saint with his foot, and the latter curses him that he shall die ere the sun rises. Then *Anasūyā* says : "The sun shall not rise." In consequence of her devotion the sun actually does not rise, which causes the gods great embarrassment, as they receive no sacrifices. There remains nothing but for them to arrange that the charming husband of *Anasūyā* remains alive.

Just as in the *Mahābhārata*, so here too, there are besides legends purely didactic dialogues upon the duties of the householder, upon Śrāddhas, upon conduct in the daily life, upon the regular sacrifices, feasts and ceremonies,² and also (Chaps. 36-43) a treatise upon Yoga.

A work complete in itself, which doubtless was only later inserted into the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, though not later than the 6th century A.D. is the *Devīmāhātmya*,³ a glorifica-

distressed, and after his death refused to go to paradise because there was nobody there in need of aid; he prefers to go to hell, where there are creatures with whom he can feel sympathy and whom he can help. (I. L. Perez, *Volkstümliche Erzählungen*, pp. 24 ff.). The original source of all these legends is probably to be found in a Buddhist Mahāyāna legend of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

¹ The name signifies the 'not jealous one'.

² Chapters 29-35. The chapter on Śrāddhas partly agrees literally with the *Gautamasmṛti*, according to W. Caland, *Altindischer Ahnenkult*, Leyden, 1893, p. 112.

³ Chaps. 81-93. Edited and translated into Latin by L. Poley, Berolini, 1831. Translated into English by Pargiter, *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*. Transl., pp. 465-523; Extracts rendered in French by Burnouf (J.A., 4, 1824, pp. 24 ff.). As an independent work, also with the titles *Caṇḍī*, *Oaṇḍīmāhātmya*, *Durgāmāhātmya* and *Saptaśatī*, it occurs in innumerable MSS., and has often been printed in India, sometimes with a Bengali translation. On the numerous translation in Bengali, s. D. Ch. Sen, *Bengali Language and Literature*, pp. 225 ff. There are also many commentaries on the text, s. Aufrecht, CC., I, p. 261. One MS. of the *Devīmāhātmya* is dated 998 A.D., and the work probably

tion of the goddess Durga, who, till the most recent times, has been worshipped with human sacrifices. In the temples of this terrible goddess the *Devīmāhātmya* is read daily, and at the great feast of Durgā (Durgāpūja)¹ in Bengal it is recited with the greatest of solemnity.

VIII. The *Āgneya-* or *Agni-Purāṇa*,² so called because it is supposed to have been communicated to Vasiṣṭha by Agni. It describes the incarnations (*Avatāras*) of Viṣṇu, among them also those as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, where it confessedly follows the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa*. Although it commences with Viṣṇu, gives directions for the ritual of the Viṣṇu-cult and contains a *Dvādaśasahasrī-Stotra* to Viṣṇu (Chap. 48), it is yet essentially a Śivaite work and deals in detail with the mystic cult of the Liṅga and of Durgā. It also mentions Tantric rites, gives instructions for the production of images of gods and their consecration, and refers to the cult of Gaṇeśa (Chap. 71) and the sun-cult (Chap. 73). A few chapters (368-370) treat of death and transmigration and Yoga (371-379), Chap. 380 contains a summary of the doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and Chap. 381 a *Yamagītā*. But the cosmological, genealogical and geographical sections peculiar to the *Purāṇas* are not missing. The especially distinctive feature of this *Purāṇa* is, however, its encyclopaedic character. It actually deals with anything and everything. We find sections on geography, astronomy and astrology, on marriage and death customs, on omina and portenta, house building and other usages of daily life, and also on politics (*nīti*) and the art of war, on law (in which it is closely connected with the law-book of Yājñavalkya), on medicine, metrics, poetics, and even on grammar and lexicography.

originated even earlier than the 7th century, for a verse from the *Devīmāhātmya* seems to have been quoted in an inscription of the year 608 A.D. (D. R. Bhandarkar, *JBRAS.*, 23, 1909, pp. 73 f.); and Bāṇa's poem *Caṇḍīśataka* is perhaps based on the *Devīmāhātmya*; Cf. G. P. Quackenbos. *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra.....together with the Text and Translation of Bāṇa's Caṇḍīśataka*, New York, 1917, pp. 249 ff., 297; Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 150; Pargiter, *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, Transl., pp. xii, xx.

¹ On this most popular of all religious festivals in Bengal c. Shib Shunder Bose, *The Hindoos as they are*, pp. 92 ff.

² Editions in *Bibl. Ind.*, 1873-1879, and *ĀnSS* No. 41, translation by M. N. Dutt, Calcutta, 1901. It is also called *Vahni-Purāṇa*. There is, however, also an *Upapurāṇa* with the same title, s. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1294 ff.

To which age this remarkable encyclopædia or its separate parts belong, it is impossible to say. In spite of the fact that the work itself contains so much that is heterogeneous, there are still many *Māhātmyas* and similar texts which claim to belong to the *Agni-Purāṇa*, but do not occur in the manuscripts of the work itself.

IX. The *Bhaviṣya* or *Bhaviṣyat-Purāṇa*. The title signifies a work which contains prophecies regarding the future (*bhaviṣya*). However, the text which has come down to us in manuscript under this title is certainly not the ancient work which is quoted in the *Āpastambīya-Dharmasūtra*.¹ The account of the Creation which it contains, is borrowed from the law-book of *Manu*, which is also otherwise frequently used.² The greater part of the work deals with the brahmanical ceremonies and feasts, the duties of the castes, and so on. Only a few legends are related. A description of the *Nāgapañcamī*-feast, dedicated to the worship of snakes, gives an opening for an enumeration of the snake-demons and for the narration of some snake-myths. A considerable section deals with the sun-worship in 'Śākadvīpa' (land of the Scythians?) in which sun-priests named *Bhojaka* and *Maga* are mentioned, and which undoubtedly is related to the Zoroastrian sun and fire cult.³

The *Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa*, which, though it contains a few ancient myths and legends, is more a handbook of religious rites, is a sort of continuation of this *Purāṇa*.

Very numerous are the *Māhātmyas* and other modern texts which claim to be parts of the *Bhaviṣya* and especially of the *Bhaviṣyottara-Purāṇa*.

¹ See above, pp. 455 f. There is still less claim to authenticity for the edition of the *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa* which appeared in Bombay in 1897 in the Srīveṅkata Press, and which Th. Aufrecht (ZDMG., 57, 1903, pp. 276 ff.) has unmasked as a 'literary fraud'.

² Cf. Wilson, Works, VI, p. lxiii; G. Bühler, SBE., Vol. 25, pp. cx f.; 78 n; W. Jahn, *Über die kosmogonischen Grundanschauungen in Mānava-Dharma-Śāstram*, pp. 38 ff.

³ Cf. Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, pp. 31 ff.; Wilson, Works, X, pp. 381 ff. We learn from an inscription written in 861 A.D., by one Maga Mātṛava, that the Magas lived in Rajputāna as early as in the 9th century. 'Maga' is a name for the Śākadvīpa Brahmins, who at the present day are still living in the district of Jodhpur, and trace their history back to the *Sūrya-Purāṇa* and the *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa*. See D. R. Bhandarkar, *Ep. Ind.*, IX, p. 279.

X. The *Brahmavaivarta-* or *Brahmakavarta-Purāṇa*.¹ The latter is the name current in Southern India. This extensive work is divided into four books. The *first* book, the *Brahma-Khaṇḍa*, deals with the creation by Brahman, the First Being, who is, however, none other than the god Kṛṣṇa.² Many legends, especially about the sage Nārada, are included. One chapter (16) contains a treatise on medicine. The *second* book, the *Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa*, deals with Prakṛti, the original matter, which, however, here seems to be conceived quite mythologically, resolving itself, at the command of Kṛṣṇa, into five goddesses (Durgā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Sāvitrī and Rādhā). The *third* book, the *Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa*, relates legends of the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, who is unknown to the oldest Indian pantheon, but is one of the most popular of the more modern Indian deities.³ In a very curious way Gaṇeśa is here represented as a kind of incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. The *last* and most extensive book, the *Kṛṣṇajanma-Khaṇḍa*, 'section of the birth of Kṛṣṇa', deals not only with the birth, but with the whole life of Kṛṣṇa, especially his battles and his love adventures with the cowherdesses (*gopīs*). It is the chief part of the whole Purāṇa, which throughout pursues no other object than to glorify the god Kṛṣṇa and his favourite wife Rādhā, in myths, legends and hymns. Rādhā is here Kṛṣṇa's Śakti.⁴ According to this Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa is so much the god above all gods, that legends are related in which not only Brahman and Śiva, but even Viṣṇu himself, are humiliated by Kṛṣṇa.

¹ Editions published at Calcutta 1887 and 1888, English translation in SBH., *Brahmavaivarta-purāṇi specimen ed.* by A. F. Stenzler, Berolini, 1829. A detailed analysis of the work by Wilson, *Works*, III, pp. 91 ff.

² The title *Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa*, which can be translated 'Purāṇa of the transformations of Brahman', probably refers to this. The Southern Indian title is not intelligible to me.

³ B. C. Mazumdar says that he has proved in the Bengali journal *Vangadarśana*, "that the worship of Gaṇeśa as an affiliated son of Pārvatī was wholly unknown to the Hindus previous to the 6th century A.D." (JBRAS., 23, 1909, p. 82).

⁴ Nimbārka, probably in the 12th century, regards Rādhā as the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa, who, in his view, is not merely an incarnation of Viṣṇu, but the eternal Brahman (cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 237 ff.). It was not until the 16th century that the sect of the Rādhāvallabbis, who attach great importance to the worship of Rādhā as Śakti, arose. See Grierson, *ERE*, X, pp. 559 f.; Farquhar, *loc cit.*, p. 318.

A large number of Māhātmyas claim to belong to this Purāṇa, which is altogether a rather inferior production.

XI. The *Laṅga-* or *Liṅga-Purāṇa*.¹ The Principal theme of the work is the worship of Śiva in his various forms, but especially in the Liṅga symbol.² There is a somewhat confused account of the legend of the origin of the Liṅga-cult : on the occasion of Śiva's visit to the Devadāru forest, the hermits' wives fall in love with the god, who is cursed by the Munis.³ In the account of the creation Śiva occupies the position which is otherwise ascribed to Viṣṇu. Corresponding to the Avatāras of Viṣṇu, legends of twenty-eight incarnations of Śiva are told in the *Liṅga-Purāṇa*. Some passages show the influence of the Tantras ;⁴ this fact, and the character of the work as a manual for the use of Śiva-worshippers would seem to indicate that it can scarcely be a very ancient work.

XII. The *Vārāha-* or *Varāha-Purāṇa*.⁵ The work owes its title to the fact that it is related to the goddess Earth (*Prthivī*) by Viṣṇu in his incarnation as a wild boar (*varāha*). Though it contains brief allusions to the creation, the genealogies, etc., it is not a Purāṇa in the ancient sense of the word, but rather a manual of prayers and rules for the Viṣṇu-worshippers. In spite of the Viṣṇuite character of the work, it yet contains a few legends relating to Śiva and Durgā. Several chapters are devoted to the Mothers and the female

¹ Editions have been published in Calcutta, Bombay, Poona and Madras, also with a commentary.

² The Liṅga (the phallus), generally in the form of a small stone column, is for the worshippers of Śiva only a symbol of the productive and creative principle of Nature as embodied in Śiva ; and it is worshipped by simple offerings of leaves and flowers and the pouring of water. The Liṅga cult certainly bears no trace of any phallic cult of an obscene nature. Cf. H. H. Wilson, *Works*, Vol. VI, p. lxix ; Monier-Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hinduism*, 4th Ed., London 1891, pp. 83, 90 f. ; Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, 142 ff. The Liṅga cult can be traced in Cambodia and Champa as early as about 550 A.D. ; s. Eliot, *loc. cit.*, p. 143 note 3.

³ I, 28-33, translated into German by W. Jahn, *ZDMG.*, 69, 1915, pp. 539 ff. The same legend also occurs in other Purāṇas, s. Jahn, *loc. cit.*, pp. 529 ff. ; 70, 1916, pp. 301 ff. and 71, 1917, pp. 167 ff.

⁴ Cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 195 f.

⁵ Ed. by Hrishīkeśa Sāstrī, *Bibl. Ind.*, 1893. According to 218, 1 the Purāṇa was 'written' by Mādhava Bhaṭṭa and Vireśvara in Benares in the year 1621 of the Vikrama era (1564 A.D.). However, this cannot be the date of the work itself, but only of a copy of it.

deities (Chaps. 90-95). We find the story of the birth of Gaṇeśa, followed by a Gaṇeśa-stotra. Furthermore, it deals with Śrāddhas (Chaps. 13 ff.), Prāyaścittas (Chaps. 119 ff.), the erection of images of the gods (Chaps. 181 ff.), etc. A considerable section (Chaps. 152-168) is nothing but a Mathurā-Māhātmya, a glorification of the sacred city which is Kṛṣṇa's birthplace. Another considerable section (Chaps. 193-212) tells the legend of Naciketas, but the narrator is more concerned with the description of heaven and hell than with the philosophical ideas contained in the ancient poem in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*.¹

XIII. The *Skānda-* or *Skanda-Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa is named after Skanda, son of Śiva and commander of the celestial armies, who is said to have related it and proclaimed Śivaite doctrines in it.² The ancient Purāṇa of this name, however, is probably entirely lost ; for though there is a considerable number of more or less extensive works claiming to be Saṃhitās and Khaṇḍas of the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, and an almost overwhelming mass of Māhātmyas which give themselves out as portions of this Purāṇa,³ only one, very ancient, manuscript contains a text which calls itself simply 'Skanda-Purāṇa'.⁴ Even this text, however, is scarcely identical with the ancient Purāṇa : for, though it contains all manner of legends of Śiva, especially of his battles with Andhaka and other demons, a few chapters on the hells and Saṃsāra, and a section on Yoga, there is hardly anything in it that corresponds to the 'five characteristics' of a Purāṇa.⁵ Texts which are considered as belonging to the *Skanda-Purāṇa* inform

¹ See above, pp. 228 f. C. L. Scherman, *Visionslitteratur*, pp. 11 f. The name is Nāciketa here, as in the *Mahābhārata*, XIII, 71.

² *Matsya-Purāṇa* 53, 42 f. The length of the *Skanda-Purāṇa* is here, as elsewhere, stated as 81,100 śloka. In *Padma-Purāṇa*, VI, 263, 81 f., too, the *Skanda-Purāṇa* is counted as among the 'tāmasa', i.e., the Śivaite Purāṇas.

³ Cf. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1319-1389.

⁴ This is the old manuscript in Gupta script, which was discovered in Nepal by Haraprasād Sāstrī and has been assigned to the 7th century A. D. by him and C. Bendall on palaeographical grounds. See Haraprasād Sāstrī, *Catalogue of Palm Leaf and Selected Paper MSS*, belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal, Calcutta 1905, pp. lii, 141 ff.

⁵ According to the short table of contents given by Haraprasād, *loc cit.* As no khaṇḍa is named in the colophons of the MS., Haraprasād considers the text to be the original *Skanda-Purāṇa*. The supposition that it might be the *Ambikā-Khaṇḍa* (*Haraprasād, Report I*, p. 4) turned out to be erroneous. The *Ambikā-khaṇḍa* (Eggeling.

us¹ that there are six Saṃhitās, namely Sanatkumariyā Sūta, Brahmī, Vaiṣṇavi, Śaṅkari and Sauri Saṃhitā, and fifty Khaṇḍas of the *Skanda-Purāṇa*. The *Sūta-Saṃhitā* is a work of some bulk.² It consists of four Khaṇḍas, the first of which is devoted wholly to the worship of Śiva. The second section (*jñānayogakhaṇḍa*) deals not only with Yoga, but also with the duties of the castes and Āśramas. The third section teaches ways and means of attaining salvation; and the fourth section begins with rules about Vedic-brahmanical ceremonies, and then deals with 'the sacrifice of meditation' and 'the sacrifice of knowledge', as well as with devotion to Śiva (*Śivabhakti*). A second part contains a Śivaite Brahmagītā and a Vedāntist Sūtagītā. The Sanatkumāra-Saṃhitā, too, contains Śivaite legends, more especially relating to the sacred places of Benares.³ The *Saura-Saṃhitā*, which is supposed to have been revealed to Yājñavalkya by the sun-god, contains chiefly cosmogonic theories. The *Śaṅkara-Saṃhitā* is also called *Agastya-Saṃhitā*, because Skanda is supposed to have communicated it to Agastya. It is doubtful, however, whether this is the *Agastya-Saṃhitā* which teaches the cult of Viṣṇu especially in his incarnation as Rāma.⁴ There is a Kāśi-Khaṇḍa,⁵ dealing with the Śiva-temples in the neighbourhood of Benares and with the sanctity of this city itself. A Gaṅgāśahasranāman, a litany

loc. cit., pp. 1321 ff.) contains a collection of legends about Śiva and Durgā, told by Sanatkumāra to Vyāsa.

¹ Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1321, 1362.

² Ed. with the commentary of Mādhavācārya in ĀnSS No. 25, 1893 in 3 vols.

³ The Sahyādri-khaṇḍa (publ. by J. G. da Cunha, Bombay, 1877) belongs to the *Sanatkumāra-saṃhitā*. Cf. Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, p. 1369 ff. The Venkaṭeśa-Māhātmya of the Sahyādri-khaṇḍa, a glorification of the temple of Mañjunī, is translated by G. K. Betham, *Ind. Ant.*, 24, 1895, pp. 231 ff. The same khaṇḍa probably also includes the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga-legend, which was transformed into a local legend, and which has been translated by V. N. Narasimmiyengar (*Ind. Ant.*, 2, 1873, pp. 140 ff.).

⁴ Cf. Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1319 ff.; 1321. In the Śivarahasya-khaṇḍa of the *Śaṅkara-saṃhitā* (Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1363 f.) the 18 Purāṇas are enumerated, of which ten (*Śaiva*, *Bhaviṣya*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Laiṅga*, *Vārāha*, *Skānda*, *Mātsya*, *Kurma*, *Vāmana*, *Brahmaṇḍa*) are declared to be Śivaite, four (*Vaiṣṇava*, *Bhāgavata*, *Nāradya*, *Gāruḍa*) Viṣṇuite, whilst *Brāhma* and *Pādma* are said to be dedicated to Brahman, *Āgneya* to Agni, *Brahmavaivarta* to Savitṛ. It is added, however, that the *Viṣṇuite Purāṇas* teach the identity of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and the *Brahma-Purāṇa*, the identity of Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

⁵ Published (with commentaries) in Benares, 1868, Calcutta 1873-80 and Bombay 1881.

of the 'thousand names of the Ganges' belongs to the same section. The above-mentioned are only a few of the many texts which are said to belong to this Purāṇa.

XIV. The *Vāmana-Purāṇa*.¹ This Purāṇa, too, has not come down to us in its original form, for the five themes of the Purāṇas, *i.e.*, Creation, etc., are scarcely mentioned, and the information given in the *Matsya-Purāṇa*² as to the contents and length of the work does not tally with out text. The text begins with an account of the incarnation of Viṣṇu as a dwarf (*vāmana*), whence it takes its name. Several chapters deal with the Avatāras of Viṣṇu in general.³ On the other hand, a considerable section deals with Liṅga-worship, and in connection with the glorification of sacred places, the Śivaite legends of the marriage of Śiva and Umā, the origin of Gaṇeśa and the birth of Kārttikeya are related.

XV. The *Kaurma- or Kūrma-Purāṇa*. In the work itself we read that it consists of *four* Saṃhitās, namely Brāhmī, Bhāgavatī, Saurī and Vaiṣṇavī; but the *Brāhmī-Saṃhitā* is the only one which has come down under the title 'Kūrma-Purāṇa'.⁴ This work begins with a hymn to the incarnation of Viṣṇu as a tortoise (*kūrma*) on which the mountain Mandara rested when the ocean was twirled. At that time Lakṣmī arose from the ocean and became Viṣṇu's consort. When the Ṛṣis ask him who this goddess is, Viṣṇu replies that she is his highest Śakti. The Introduction then relates further how Indradyumna, who in a former birth had been a king, but was born again as a Brahman by reason of his devotion to Viṣṇu, desired to gain knowledge of the glory of Śiva. Lakṣmī refers him to Viṣṇu. Then he worships Viṣṇu as the Universal God, the Creator and Preserver of the universe, but also as 'Mahādeva', 'Śiva' and as 'father and mother of all beings'. At length Viṣṇu, in his incarnation

¹ Published, with Bengali translation, Calcutta, 1885.

² 53, 45 f. Cf. Wilson, Works, Vol. VI, pp. lxxiv f.

³ According to Aufrecht (*Bodl. Cat.*, p. 46) these chapters (24-32) are mainly taken from the *Matsya-Purāṇa*.

⁴ Published by Nīlmaṇi Mukhopādhyāya in *Bibl. Ind.*, 1890. It contains 6,000 ślokas. According to the statements made in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, and *Matsya-Purāṇa*, the *Kūrma-Purāṇa* contains 17,000 or 18,000 ślokas.

as the tortoise, imparts the Purāṇa to him. As in this Introduction, Śiva is the Highest Being throughout the work, but it is emphasized over and over again that in reality Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva are one.¹ The worship of *Sakti*, i.e., 'Energy' or 'Creative force' conceived as a female deity, is also emphasized. Devī, the 'Highest Goddess' (*Parameśvarī*), the consort and Śakti of Śiva, is praised under 8,000 names.² In like manner as Viṣṇu is none other than Śiva, Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's śakti, is in reality not apart from the Devī.³ When the sons of Kārttavīrya, some of whom worshipped Viṣṇu and the others Śiva, could not agree as to which god was the more worthy of worship, the seven Ṛṣis decided the dispute by declaring that the deity worshipped by any man is that man's deity, and that all the gods deserve the worship of at least some beings.⁴ Notwithstanding, Śiva is the god above all gods to such a degree that, though Kṛṣṇa is praised as Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa, he obtains a son for his wife Jāmbavatī only after strenuous asceticism and by the mercy of Śiva.⁵ Moreover, in spite of the tolerance as regards the recognition of all the gods, there are allusions in several places to the false doctrines which have been sent into the world to deceive mankind, and to false manuals which will come into existence during the Kaliyuga.⁶

The five themes of the Purāṇas, namely, the Creation, the genealogies, etc., are also treated in the *Kūrma-Purāṇa*,

¹ In I, 6 (p. 56) Brahman is worshipped as Trimūrti. I, 9 especially inculcates the unity of the three gods. Cf. also I, 26.

² I, 11 and 12. Śiva divides himself into two parts, a male and a female, the former gives rise to the Rudras, and the latter to the Śaktis. Cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 195 f.

³ I, 17 (pp. 206 f.) Prahlāda praises Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī as Viṣṇu's Śakti.

⁴ I, 22 (pp. 239 ff.).

⁵ I, 25-27. Here (p. 269) there is also a reference to a Yogaśāstra written by the great Yogin Yājñavalkya, which is perhaps an allusion to the *Tājñavalkyaśāstra*, where Yoga is taught. Cf. F. E. Hall, *A Contribution towards an index to the Bibliography of the Indian Philosophical Systems*, Calcutta, 1859, p. 14. In I, 26, Kṛṣṇa recommends the Liṅga cult and explains its origin.

⁶ This appellation is given to the Śivaite sects and Śāstras of the Kāpālas, Bhairavas, Yāmālas, Vāmas, Ārhatas, Nākulās (i.e., Lākuliśa-Pāśupatas, cf. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism* etc., pp. 116 f.), Pāśupatas and the Viṣṇuite Pāñcarātra: I, 12; 166-30 (pp. 137, 184, 305). The Vāmas or 'left-hand ones' are those Śakti worshippers whose cult is connected with orgiastic rites. See below in the chapter on the Tantras.

and in this connection a few of Viṣṇu's Avatāras are touched upon. However, an entire chapter (I. 53) is devoted to the incarnations of Śiva. A considerable section of the first part consists of a description and glorification of the holy places of Benares (*Kāśimāhātmya*) and Allahabad (*Prayāgamāhātmya*). The second part begins with an *Īśvaragītā* (counterpart to the *Bhagavadgītā*), teaching the knowledge of God, i.e., Śiva, through meditation. This piece is followed by a *Vyāsagītā*, a larger section in which Vyāsa teaches the attainment of the highest knowledge through pious works and ceremonies, and therefore delivers a lecture on the duties of the householder, the forest-hermit and the ascetic. A few chapters deal with expiatory ceremonies for all sorts of crimes, where there is also mention of chastity. This gives rise to the narration of a story of Sītā (not occurring in the *Rāmāyaṇa*), how she is rescued from the hands of Rāvaṇa by the fire-god.

XVI. The *Mātsya-* or *Matsya-Purāṇa*.¹ This, again, is one of the older works of the Purāṇa literature, or at least one of those which have preserved most of the ancient text, and do fair justice to the definition of a 'Purāṇa'. It commences with the story of the great flood out of which Viṣṇu, in the form of a fish (*matsya*) saves only Manu alone. While the ship in which Manu is sailing along is being drawn through the flood by the fish, there takes place between him and Viṣṇu, incarnated as a fish, the conversation which forms the substance of the Purāṇa. Creation is treated in detail, then follow the genealogies, into which is inserted a section about the Fathers and their cult (Chaps. 14-22). Neither are the usual geographical, astronomical and chronological sections, absent, and, according to V. A. Smith (see above, p. 460) the lists of kings in this Purāṇa are particularly reliable for the Andhra dynasty. It has very much in common with the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃśa*; thus the legends of Yayāti (Chaps. 24-43), Sāvitrī (Chaps. 203-214), the incarnations of Viṣṇu (Chaps. 161-179, 244-248); and there is often literal

¹ Published in AnSS No. 54. (The quotations are given according to this edition., Translated into English in SBH., Vol. 17. The edition has 291 adhyāyas, but the MS described by Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, pp. 38 ff., has only 278.

agreement. There are, however, very numerous later additions and interpolations. For instance we find a considerable section about all manner of festivals and rites (*Vratas*, Chaps. 54-102), a glorification of the sacred places of Allahabad (*Prayāgamāhātmya*, Chaps. 103-112), Benares (*Vārāṇasī* = and *Avimuktamāhātmya*, Chaps. 180-185), and of the river Narmadā (Chaps. 186-194); then sections on the duties of a king (Chaps. 215-227), on omina and portenta (Chaps. 228-238), ceremonies at the building of a house (Chaps. 252-257), the erection and dedication of statues of deities, temples and palaces (Chaps. 258-270), the sixteen kinds of pious donations (Chaps. 274-289), etc. As far as the religious content is concerned, the *Matsya-Purāṇa* might be called Śivaite with just as much reason as it is classed as Viṣṇuite. Religious festivals of the Vaiṣṇavas are described side by side with those of the Śaivas, and both Viṣṇu- and Śiva-legends are related. In Chapter 13 Devī ('the Goddess', Śiva's wife Gaurī) enumerates to Dakṣa the one hundred and eight names by which she wishes to be glorified. It is obvious that both sects used the work as a sacred book.

XVII. The *Gāruḍa- or Garuḍa-Purāṇa*.¹ This is a Viṣṇuite Purāṇa. It takes its name from the mythical bird Garuḍa, to whom it was revealed by Viṣṇu himself, and who then imparted it to Kaśyapa. It treats some of the five themes, viz., Creation, the ages of the world, the genealogies of the solar and lunar dynasties; but far more attention is given to the worship of Viṣṇu, to descriptions of Viṣṇuite rites and festivals (*Vratas*), to expiatory ceremonies (*Prāyaścittas*) and glorifications of sacred places. It is also cognisant of Śakti-worship, and gives rules for the worship of the 'five gods' (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā, Sūrya and Gaṇeśa).² Moreover, like the *Agni-Purāṇa*, it is a kind of encyclopaedia, in which the most diversified subjects are dealt with: thus, the contents of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃśa* are retold, and there are sections on cosmography, astronomy

¹ Published by Jibananda Vidyasagara, Calcutta 1890. English translation by Manmatha Nath Dutt, Calcutta 1908 (*Wealth of India*, Vol. VIII).

² Cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 178 f.

and astrology, omina and portenta, chiromancy, medicine, metrics, grammar, knowledge of precious stones (*ratnaparīkṣā*) and politics (*nīti*). A considerable portion of the *Yājñavalkya-Dharmaśāstra* has been included in the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa*.

What is counted as the Uttarakhanda or 'second part' of the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* is the *Pretakalpa*, a voluminous though entirely unsystematic work, which treats of everything connected with death, the dead and the beyond. In motley confusion and with many repetitions, we find doctrines on the fate of the soul after death, Karman, rebirth and release from rebirth, on desire as the cause of Saṃsāra, on omens of death, the path to Yama, the fate of the Pretas (*i.e.*, the departed who still hover about the earth as spirits, and have not as yet found the way to the world beyond), the torments of the hells, and the Pretas as causing evil omens and dreams. Interspersed we find rules of all kinds about rites to be performed at the approach of death, the treatment of the dying and of the corpse, funeral rites and ancestor-worship, the especial funeral sacrifices for a Sati, *i.e.*, a woman who enters the funeral pyre with her husband. Here and there we also find legends recalling the Buddhist Petavatthu, telling of encounters with Pretas who relate the cause of their wretched existence (sins which they committed during their lifetime).¹ An 'extract' (*Sāroddhāra*) of this work was made by Naunidhirāma.² In spite of its title, this work is not a mere extract from the *Pretakalpa*, for the author also utilised material from other Purāṇas, and treated the subject more systematically. Among other works he drew on the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, whence it follows that he was later than this Purāṇa.

Among the Māhātmyas which claim to be parts of the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa*, especial mention should be made of a Gayā-māhātmya in praise of Gayā, the place of pilgrimage, where it is particularly meritorious to perform Srāddhas.

¹ A detailed analysis of the contents of the *Pretakalpa* is given by E. Abegg, *Der Pretakalpa des Garuḍa-Purāṇa* (Naunidhirāma's 'Sāroddhāra'). *Eine Darstellung des hinduistischen Totenkultes und Jenseitsglaubens*übersetzt.....Berlin und Leipzig, 1921, pp. 8 ff; chapters X-XII translated pp. 229 ff.

² This 'Sāroddhāra' was published under the title 'Garuḍa-Purāṇa' in Bombay NBP in 1903 and with an English translation by E. Wood and S. V. Subrahmanyam in SB I., Vol. IX, 1911. There is a good German translation by Abegg, *Pretakalpa*, etc. (s. the preceding Note).

XVIII. The *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa*.¹ In the list in the *Kūrma-Purāṇa* the eighteenth Purāṇa is called 'Vāyaviya Brahmāṇḍa', the 'Purāṇa of the Brahman-egg proclaimed by Vāyu', and it is possible that the original Brahmāṇḍa was but an earlier version of the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*.² According to the *Matsya-Purāṇa* (53, 55f.) it is said to have been proclaimed by Brahman, and to contain a glorification of the Brahman-egg³ as well as a detailed account of the future kalpas in 12,200 ślokas. It appears, however, that the original work of this name is lost, for our manuscripts for the most part contain only Māhātmyas, Stotras and Upākhyānas which claim to be parts of the Brahmāṇḍa.

The *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*,⁴ i.e., 'the *Rāmāyaṇa* in which Rāma is the Supreme Ātman', in which Advaita (the monism of the Vedānta) and Rāma-bhakti are taught as paths to salvation, is a very well-known book, which is considered as a part of the *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa*. As in the case of Vālmiki's poem, the work is divided into seven books, bearing the same titles as in the ancient epic; but it is only an epic in its external form—in reality it is a manual of devotion, Tantric in character. Like the Tantras it is in the form of a dialogue between Śiva and his wife Umā. Throughout the work Rāma is essentially the god Viṣṇu, and the Sītā who is abducted by Rāvaṇa is only an illusion, whilst the real Sītā, who is identical with Lakṣmī and Prakṛti, does not appear until after the fire ordeal at the end of the book. The *Rāmahr̥daya* (I, 1) and the *Rāmagītā* (VII, 5) are texts which are memorised by the devotees of Rāma. The

¹ Published in Bombay, Śrī Veṅkateśvara Press, 1906.

² Cf. Pargiter, *Anc. Ind. Hist. Trad.*, pp. 77 f. H. H. Wilson (Works, Vol. VI, pp. lxxxv f.) mentions a MS. of the *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa* the first part of which agrees almost entirely with the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, whilst the second part is dedicated to Lalitā Devī, a form of Durgā, and teaches her worship by Tantric rites. On the island of Bali a *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa* is the only sacred book of the local Śiva-worshippers. Cf. R. Friedrich, *JRAS.*, 1876, p. 170 f.; Weber, *Ind. Stud.* II, p. 131 f.

³ Even the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads already tell of the golden egg out of which the universe was created. Cf. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, XI, 1, 6 (above pp. 194 f.) and *Chāndogya-Up.*, III, 9, 1. According to the cosmogony of the Purāṇas Brahman (or Viṣṇu in the form of Brahman) dwells in the egg in which the whole of the universe is locked up, and out of which it unfolds itself by the will of the Creator. Cf. *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, I, 2; *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 4, 76 ff.; Manu I, 9 ff.

⁴ There are numerous Indian editions (the Bombay NSP., 1891 edition is recommended) and several commentaries, among them one by Śaṅkara. English translation by Lāla Baij Nath in SBH., 1013.

fact that the Marathi poet-saint Eknātha, who lived in the 16th century, calls it a modern work, proves that the work cannot be very ancient.¹

The *Nāsiketopākhyāna*, which also claims to be a part of the *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa*, is nothing but a most insipid, amplified and corrupted version of the beautiful old legend of Naciketas.²

As regards the *Upapurāṇas*, they do not in general differ essentially from the *Purāṇas*, except inasmuch as they are even more exclusively adapted to suit the purposes of local cult and the religious needs of separate sects. Those of the *Upapurāṇas* which claim to be supplements to one or other of the 'great *Purāṇas*' have already received mention. We shall now only refer to a few of the more important among the other *Upapurāṇas*.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara* is occasionally given out as a part of a *Purāṇa*, namely the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa*, but generally it is counted as an independent *Upapurāṇa*. It is repeatedly quoted by Albērūnī as the 'Viṣṇudharma'.³ It is a Kashmiri Vaiṣṇava book of encyclopædic character in three sections. *Section I* deals with the usual themes of the *Purāṇas*: the creation of the world, cosmology, geography, astronomy, division of time, genealogies, Stotras, rules about Vratas and Śrāddhas.⁴ Among the genealogical legends, that of Purūravas and Urvaśī is also related—more or less in agreement with Kalidāsa's drama. *Section II* deals not only with law and politics, but also with medicine, the science of war, astronomy and astrology. There is here a prose section with the special title '*Paitāmaha-Siddhānta*'. If, as is probable, this is an extract from the *Brahma-Sphuṭa-Siddhānta* written by

¹ Cf. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism* etc., p. 48; Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 250 f.

² Cf. F. Belloni-Filippi in GSAI., 16, 1903 and 17, 1904: Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1252 ff.

³ Edition of the text in Bombay, Śrī Veṅkateśvara Press, 1912. Analysis of the contents according to Kashmiri MSS. and a comparison with the quotations of Alberūnī by G. Bühler. *Ind. Ant.*, 19, 1890, pp. 382 ff. According to Bühler, Alberūnī used two separate works with the same title, and mixed the two together. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, pp. 1308 f., describes a MS. which contains six chapters more than the edition. In the MS. the title of the work is '*Viṣṇudharmāḥ*'.

⁴ As regards the Śrāddhas, W. Caland *Altindischer Ahnenkult*, Leyden, 1893, pp. 68, 112, has traced connections with the *Viṣṇu-Smṛti*. Cf. Abegg, *Der Pretakalpa*, pp. 5 f.

Brahmagupta in 628 A.D., the *Viṣṇudharmottara* must have been compiled between 628 and 1000 A.D.¹ *Section III*, too, is of a very miscellaneous character, treating of grammar, lexicography, metrics and poetics, dancing, singing and music, sculpture and painting (the making of images of gods)² and architecture (construction of temples).

The *Bṛhad-Dharma-Purāṇa*,³ 'the Great Purāṇa of the Duties', which appears as the eighteenth in a list of the Upapurāṇas,⁴ only devotes the beginning of its first section, and its last section to Dharma, with the glorification of which it begins. The greater portion of the first section is in the form of a conversation between the Devī and her two friends Jayā and Vijayā, which gives it a Tantric stamp. In the second section, too, the Devī appears as the Great Goddess, to whom Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva come singing her praises, and II, 60 teaches that the universe and all the gods have their existence in Śiva and Śakti. The fact that it is not a Tantra is, however, shown by the contents of the work, which, by reason of its relations with the epic and the legal literature, is deserving of some interest, though the work cannot be a very ancient one.

In the opening chapters the duties towards one's parents, especially the mother, and the Gurus in general, are inculcated in great detail. By way of illustrating the importance of these duties, a legend of a 'hunter Tulādhāra' is told, which, though having some reference to the *Mahābhārata* stories⁵ of Dharmavyādha and Tulādhāra, has little in common with them except the name. Then come sections on the Tīrthas, the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Rāma, the story of Sītā and the origin of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The latter work is called the root of all Kāvya, Itihāsa, Purāṇas and Saṃhitās. It was only after Vālmīki had completed this poem at the command of the god Brahman, and had declined to write the *Mahābhārata* also, that Vyāsa set to work to compile both the *Mahābhārata* and the

¹ Cf. G. Thibaut, *Astronomie* etc. ('Grundriss', III, 9), p. 58. The commentators of Brahmagupta's work maintain that this author drew upon the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. MSS. of the '*Viṣṇudharmamah*' are dated 1047 and 1090; s. Haraprasād, *Report I*, p. 5.

² On this extremely interesting section s. Dr. Stella Kramrisch, *Calcutta Review*, Feb., 1924, pp. 331 ff. and *Journal of Letters*, Calcutta University, Vol. XI, 1924.

³ Edited by Haraprasād Śāstrī in *Bibl. Ind.*, 1897. The work consists of a 'first', 'middle' and 'last' khaṇḍa.

⁴ In the *Bṛhad-Dharma-Purāṇa* itself (I, 25, 26).

⁵ See above pp. 365 f.



Purāṇas.¹ Vālmīki in his hermitage converses with Vyāsa on the composition of the *Mahābhārata*, which is then praised extravagantly. A prayer, which also contains the titles of the most important Parvans of the *Mahābhārata*, is recommended as an amulet (I, 30, 41 ff.). The second section consists mainly of legends of the origin of Gaṅgā, but all manner of other myths and legends are interwoven with them. Among the Avatāras of Viṣṇu, mention is made of those as Kapila, Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Buddha. Śiva sings a song in praise of Viṣṇu.² A section of considerable length (II, 54-58) contains rules for the cult of the Ganges (*gaṅgādharmāḥ*). The legend of the miraculous origin of Gaṇeśa is told in the last chapter (II, 60). The last section deals with the duties of the castes and Āśramas, the duties of women, the adoration of various gods, the festivals of the year, the worship of the sun, the moon and planets, with the Yugas, the origin of evil and wickedness in the world (III, 12) and with the intermixture of castes (III, 13-14).

The *Śiva-Purāṇa*, which is said to consist of no less than twelve Saṃhitās, is one of the most voluminous Upapurāṇas.³ The *Gaṇeśa-Purāṇa*⁴ and the *Caṇḍī- or Caṇḍikā-Purāṇa*⁵ are also Śivaite Upapurāṇas. The *Śāmba-Purāṇa*⁶ is dedicated to the cult of the sun. The deeds of Viṣṇu in the future age at the close of the Kali-Yuga are described in the *Kalki-Purāṇa*⁷. The *Kālikā-Purāṇa*⁸ treats of the deeds of the goddess Kālī in her numerous forms, and of the worship dedicated to her. One chapter⁹ deals in detail with the animal and human sacrifices which should be offered to her. Curiously enough it also contains a chapter on politics.

¹ There is here a list of the 18 Purāṇas and the 18 Upapurāṇas (I, 25, 18 ff.) and also an enumeration of the Dharmaśāstras (I, 29, 24 f.).

² *Śivagānam* (II, 44). Previously Nārada delivers a lecture to Viṣṇu on the significance of the Rāgas and Rāgiṇīs in the art of singing.

³ Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, pp. 1311 ff. Editions of a *Śiva-Purāṇa* appeared in Bombay (1878, 1880, 1884).

⁴ Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, pp. 78 f.; Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, p. 1199. An edition appeared in Poona in 1876. In the *Maudgala-Purāṇa*, too (Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1289 ff.), Gaṇeśa is worshipped as the highest deity.

⁵ Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1202 ff.

⁶ Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1316 ff. A *Śāmba-Purāṇa* was published in Bombay in 1885.

⁷ Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1188 f. Editions have appeared in Calcutta.

⁸ Eggeling, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1189 ff. Edition Bombay, 1891.

⁹ The 'chapter of blood' (*rudhirādhyāya*) translated into English by W. C. Blaquiére in *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. 5 (4th ed., London, 1807), pp. 371 ff.

The majority of the Māhātmyas which are connected with or included in the Purāṇas and the Upapurāṇas, is, on the whole, inferior literature. They arose as hand-books for the Purohitas of the Tirthas praised in them, and tell legends which in part belong to tradition, and in part are inventions, with the purpose of proving the holiness of these places of pilgrimage. They describe, too, the ceremonies which the pilgrims are to perform and the route they are to follow. For this reason they are not unimportant from the point of view of the topography of India. Thus in particular, the *Nilamata*,¹ the Kāśmīra-māhātmya, is an important work from the point of view of the history, legendary lore and topography of Kashmir.² The Nāga king Nila is a kind of cultural hero of Kashmir, and the work contains 'the doctrines of Nila' which he imparted to the Brahman Candradeva.³ It tells the legends of the primeval history of Kashmir (verses 1-481). whereupon there is a description of the ceremonies and festivals prescribed by Nila. Many of these are the usual Brahmanical and Puranic rites, but we find some which are peculiar to Kashmir. Thus joyous festivals are celebrated with singing, music and drinking bouts at the New Year, on the first of the month Kārtika, on which Kashmir is said to have arisen (v. 561 ff.), and then again on the occasion of the first fall of snow (v. 579 ff.). On the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month Vaiśākha, the birthday of Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is solemnly celebrated by the Brahmans; a statue of Buddha is erected, Buddhist speeches are made and Buddhist monks are honoured (v. 809 ff.). The historian Kalhaṇa (about 1148 A.D.) drew on the *Nilamata* in his *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* for the ancient history of Kashmir; and he regarded it as a venerable 'Purāṇa'.⁴ It must, therefore, be several centuries earlier than Kalhaṇa's work.

¹ *Nilamatapurāṇam* (Sanskrit Text) edited with Introduction etc. by Ram Lal Kanjilal and Pandit Jagad-dhar Zadoo, Lahore 1924 (Punjab Sanskrit Series).

² Cf. Bühler, *Report*, pp. 37 ff., LV ff.; M. A. Stein *Kalhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, Translated, I, pp. 76 f.; II, pp. 376 ff.; Pandit Anand Koul, JASB., 6, 1910, pp. 195 ff.

³ Cf. *Nilamata*, vss., 424 ff.; *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, I, pp. 182-184.

⁴ Kalhaṇa calls the work 'Nilamata' (*Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, I, 14; 16; or 'Nilapurāṇa' *loc. cit.*, I, 178). Bhandarkar, *Report* 1883-84, p. 44, mentions a MS. in which the work is described as a Kāśmīramāhātmya with the title *Nilamata*. The pandits of Kashmir usually call it 'Nilamata-purāṇa'.



Among the offshoots of the Purāṇa literature mention should also be made of the Nepalese Vamśāvalis ('Genealogies'), which are partly Brahmanical and partly Buddhist, the Nepāla-Māhātmya, and the Vāgbatī-Māhātmya, which claims to be part of a *Paśupati-Purāṇa*.¹

Finally we here mention another work, which, though an epic and not a Purāṇa, nevertheless has the sectarian character of the Purāṇas : this is the *Āśvamedhikaparvan* of the Jaimini-Bhārata,² i.e., of the *Mahābhārata-Saṃhitā* ascribed to Jaimini.³ This poem, written in the ornate style, describes the combats and adventures of the heroes Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa, etc., who accompanied the sacrificial steed destined for Yudhiṣṭhira's horse-sacrifice, but it diverges greatly from the *Mahābhārata* story. Besides, the narrative of the horse-sacrifice merely provides a welcome opportunity to insert numerous legends and tales of which there is not the slightest trace in the *Mahābhārata*. A considerable section (*Kuśalavopākhyāna*, 'the episode of Kuśa and Lava') contains a brief reproduction of the entire *Rāmāyaṇa*. Among other lands the heroes go the realm of the Amazons (*strīrājya*) and we hear of the adventures which happened to them there. The story of Candrahāsa and Viṣayā (*Candrahāśopākhyāna*),⁴ is of importance in the literature of the world. It is a version of

¹ See S. Lévi, *Le Népal*, AMG., Paris, 1905, I, pp. 193 ff., 201 ff., 205 ff.

² Editions published in Bombay, Poona and Calcutta. There are numerous MSS. Cf. Holtzmann, *Das Mahābhārata*, III, pp. 37 ff.; Weber, HSS., Verz. I, pp. 111 ff., Aufrecht, *Bodl. Cat.*, I, p. 4; Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, VI, p. 1159.

³ In the *Mahābhārata* (I, 63, 89 f.) it is related that Vyāsa taught the *Mahābhārata* to his five pupils Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila, Śuka and Vaiśampāyana, and that each one of these published a *Saṃhitā* of it. It is open to doubt, however, whether there was actually a complete *Mahābhārata-Saṃhitā* by Jaimini and whether this *Āśvamedhikaparvan* is the sole remnant of it. Talboys Wheeler, *The History of India*, London, 1867, I, 377, has unwittingly reproduced the contents of the Jaimini-*Āśvamedhikaparvan* in the chapter on 'The Horse Sacrifice of Raja Yudhishtira'.

⁴ Told by T. Wheeler, *loc. cit.*, pp. 522 ff. Text and German translation by A. Weber (*Monatsberichte der preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1869, pp. 10 ff., 377 ff.), who was the first to call attention to the Western parallels, and more recently by J. Schick, *Corpus Hamleticum*, I, 1, *Das Glückskind mit dem Todesbrief*, *Orientalische Fassungen*, Berlin 1912, pp. 167 ff. In this book Schick deals in detail with the Buddhist and Jain versions of this story (which will be dealt with in Vol. II), the popular modern Indian versions and the Western Asiatic adaptations through the medium of which the story reached Europe. In Europe we find the story, among other places, in Chapter XX of the Latin *Gesta Romanorum* (cf. M. Gaster, JRS., 1910, pp. 449 ff.), in Dasent's *Norse Tales* (cf. C. H. Tawney in *Ind. Ant.*, 10, 1881, pp. 190 f.), in the French romance

the story recurring so frequently in Indian (Buddhist and Jain) and in Western narrative literature, of a youth who has been born under a lucky star and always escapes the infamous machinations of the wicked adversary who seeks his destruction. Finally the persecuted young man is made to deliver a letter ordering his own death; when a maiden alters or exchanges the fatal letter, and becomes the bride of the youth, who attains to wealth or power, whilst the fate which had been destined for him befalls the adversary or the adversary's son. Now the youth Candrahāsa, in the Jaimini-Bhārata was immune from all dangers solely because, from his childhood onwards, he was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu and always carried a Śālagrāma stone (the sacred symbol of Viṣṇu) about with him.¹ The conclusion of the legend takes the form of a glorification of the sacred stone and the tulasī plant, which is also sacred to Viṣṇu, in the extravagant style of the later Purāṇas. In the whole poem Kṛṣṇa is not only a hero, but is honoured as the god Viṣṇu. He appears, as a helper, to all who appeal to him with love (*bhakti*). He works all manner of miracles, he restores a dead child to life, he feeds multitudes of munis with a single leaf of a vegetable, and so on, and whosoever beholds Kṛṣṇa's countenance, is freed from all his sins. Nothing definite can be said regarding

of the Emperor Constantine after whom Constantinople is named (cf. Joseph Jacobs in his Introduction to *Old French Romances done into English* by William Morris, London, 1896, pp. viii ff.) and in the story of Amleth by Saxo Grammaticus. Only the motif of the altered fatal letter has been adopted in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In German the narrative is best-known through Schiller's poem *Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer*. Cf. Th. Benfey, *Pantschatantra*, I, 321, 340; E. Kuhn, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, IV, pp. 242 ff.; E. Cosquin, *La légende du page de sainte Elizabeth de Portugal*, Paris, 1912 (Extrait de la Revue des questions historiques). The earliest of all versions hitherto known is that in the *Chinese Tripitaka* (Ed. Chavannes, *cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois*, I, No. 45), which was translated into Chinese by Seng-houei who died in 280 A.D.

¹ Among the Bhāgavatas Candrahāsa became a Vaiṣṇava saint, and in Nābhādāsa's *Bhakt-Māla* his story is narrated, as in the Jaimini-Bhārata, as that of the thirty-first of the 'forty-two beloved ones of the Lord'; s. Grierson, JRAS., 1910, p. 292 ff. Cf. N. B. Godabole, *Ind. Ant.*, 11, 1882, pp. 84 ff. The story also occurs in Kaśīrām's Bengali version of the *Mahābhārata* (s. *Calcutta Review*, December, 1924, pp. 480 ff.). The motif of the changed 'letter of death' alone occurs in folk-tales from Bengal, the Punjab, and Kashmir. Cf. *Hatim's Tales Kashmiri Stories and Songs* by Sir Aurel Stein and Sir G. A. Grierson, London, 1923, p. 97, with Notes by W. Crooke, *ib.*, pp. xlv ff.

the date of the *Jaimini-Bhārata*, respecting its Āśvamedhikaparvan. Judging by the nature of the Viṣṇu-worship appearing in the work, it is probably not earlier than the later works and sections of the Purāṇa literature. At any rate it is later than the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* quoted at the end of the Candrahāsa legend.¹

THE TANTRA-LITERATURE

SAṂHITĀS, ĀGAMAS, TANTRAS

'Tantric' influences have already been noticed in several of the later Purāṇas, namely, isolated allusions to the cult of the Śaktis, the female deities, considerable sections in the form of dialogues between Śiva and Pārvatī and the occasional use of mystic syllables and formulas (*mantras*) and diagrams (*yantras*). Whereas, however, the Purāṇas always maintain a certain connection with epic poetry, and are, as it were, a repertory of Indian legend poetry, the Tantras, and the Saṁhitās and Āgamas, which differ from them but slightly, rather bear the stamp of purely theological works teaching the technicalities of the cult of certain sects together with their metaphysical and mystical principles. Strictly speaking, the 'Saṁhitās' are the sacred books of the Vaiṣṇavas, the 'Āgamas' those of the Śaivas and the 'Tantras' those of the Śaktas. However, there is no clear line of demarcation between the terms, and the expression 'Tantra' is frequently used as a general term for this class of works.²

¹ The astrologer Varāhamihira (6th century A.D.) is mentioned in 55, 8. The scene of the story of Candrahāsa is laid in the South in the land of the Keralas. A Canarese version of the Jaimini-Āśvamedhikaparvan by the Brahmin Lakṣmīśa is the most popular work in Canarese literature. Lakṣmīśa lived after 1585 and before 1724. Cf. E. P. Rice, *Kanarese Literature* ('Heritage of India Series'), 1921, pp. 85 ff. and H. F. Mögling, ZDMG, 24, 1870, 309 ff.; 25, 22 ff.; 27, 1873, 364 ff.

² Thus the Viṣṇuite *Pādma-Saṁhitā* is also called *Pādma-Tantra*. The *Sāttvataṁ tantram* mentioned in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, 1, 3, 8 is probably the *Sāttvata-Saṁhitā*. *Lakṣmī-Tantra* is a Viṣṇuite work, and *Pāñcarātra-Āgama* is spoken of as well as *Pāñcarātra-Saṁhitās*. Cf. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, pp. 188 f. *Tantra* means 'a system of doctrines', 'a book', i.e., 'Bible'; *Āgama* means 'tradition' and *Saṁhitā* a 'collection of sacred texts'.

As a matter of fact, all these works really have characteristic features in common. Though they are not positively hostile to the Veda, they propound that the precepts of the Veda are too difficult for our age, and that, for this reason, an easier cult and an easier doctrine have been revealed in them. Moreover, these sacred books are accessible not only to the higher castes, but to Śūdras and women too. On the other hand, it is true that they contain Secret Doctrines which can only be obtained from a teacher (*guru*) after a ceremonial initiation (*dīkṣā*), and which must not be communicated to any uninitiated person.¹ A complete Tantra (*Samhitā, Āgama*) should consist of four parts according to the four main themes treated, viz., (1) Jñāna, 'knowledge', comprising actual philosophical doctrines, sometimes with a monotheistic bias, and sometimes leaning towards monism, but also a confused occultism including the 'knowing' of the secret powers of the letters, syllables, formulas and figures (*mantraśāstra, yantraśāstra*); (2) Yoga, i.e., 'meditation, concentration', also more especially with a view to acquiring magic powers, hence also 'magic' (*māyāyoga*); (3) Kriyā, 'action', i.e., instructions for the making of idols and the construction and consecration of temples; (4) Caryā, 'conduct', i.e., rules regarding rites and festivals, and social duties. Though in reality all these four branches are not treated in every single one of these works, they all contain a medley of philosophy and occultism, mysticism and magic, and ritual and ethics.

Hitherto little is known about the *Śaiva-Āgamas*.² There are 28 Āgamas, which are said to have been proclaimed by Śiva himself after the creation of the world, and each Āgama has a number of Upāgamas. As we know scarcely

¹ "The Vedas, Śāstras and Purāṇas are like harlots accessible to all, but the Śivaite science is well concealed like a woman of good family" (Avalon, *Principles of Tantra*, I, p. ix). In the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, Chap. I, we read that the doctrine is not to be communicated to any uninitiated person, not even to Viṣṇu or to Brahman. The *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, III, 4 says: Vedas, Purāṇas and Śāstras may be propagated, but the Śaiva and Śākta Āgamas are declared to be secret doctrines.

² Cf. H. W. Schomerus, *Der Śaiva-Siddhānta*, Leipzig, 1912, pp. 7 ff., a list of the 28 Āgamas, *ib.* p. 14. Only fragments of 20 Āgamas have been preserved. Portions of two Upāgamas, Mrgendra and Pauṣkara, are printed. Cf. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, pp. 204 f.

anything of the contents of these works, we are not in a position to determine their date.¹

We have a little more information about the *Samhitās* of the Viṣṇuite Pāñcarātra sect.² Though the traditional list enumerates 108 Pāñcarātra-*Samhitās*, there is actually mention of more than 215, of which, however, only twelve have been published.³ One of the earlier *Samhitās* is the *Ahīrbudhnya-Samhitā*,⁴ a Kashmiri work which probably originated not long after the fourth century A.D.⁵

The work takes the form of a conversation between Ahīrbudhnya, i.e., Śiva, and Nārada. The smaller portion of the work is philosophical in content, and the greater portion occult.⁶ Several chapters deal with the Creation.⁷ When Nārada asks how it is that men hold such varied opinions regarding the Creation, Ahīrbudhnya replies (Chap. 8) that it

¹ According to Schomerus (*loc. cit.*, pp. 11 f.) the Āgamas were used by Tirumūlār and other Tamil poets as far back as the first or second century A.D., and would therefore originate in pre-Christian times. However, it is more likely that these poets should be assigned to the 9th century and the Āgamas to the 7th or 8th century A.D. Cf. Farquhar, *An outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 193 ff.

² Especially by the researches of F. O. Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā*, Adyar, Madras, S. 1916, Cf. A. Govindacarya Svamin, JRAS., 1911, pp. 935 ff.; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., pp. 39 ff.; Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, pp. 194 ff.; Farquhar, *An outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 182 ff. There are various explanations of the name 'Pāñcarātra', it is probably connected with the Pāñcarātra-Sattra, a sacrifice lasting five days, which is taught in the *Satapatha-Brahmaṇa*, Cf. Schrader, *loc. cit.*, pp. 23 ff.; Govindacarya *loc. cit.*, pp. 940 f.

³ See the lists in Schrader, *loc. cit.*, pp. 4-13. A list of 25 Pāñcarātra 'Tantras' is enumerated in the *Agni-Purāṇa*, Chap. 39. Most of the published texts are difficult of access. A few extracts from the *Sāttvata-Samhitā* are given by Schrader, *loc. cit.*, pp. 149 ff. in translation. On the *Pādma-Samhitā*, cf. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, IV, pp. 847 ff.; on the *Lakṣmī-Tantra*, in which Lakṣmī is worshipped as the Śakti of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and the final cause of the world, cf. Eggeling, *ib.*, pp. 850 f.

⁴ Edited for the Adyar Library by M. D. Rāmānujācārya, under the supervision of F. Otto Schrader, Adyar, Madras, S., 1916. This is the only critical edition of a *Samhitā*.

⁵ As it is acquainted with the three great schools of Buddhism, and as the astrological term *horā* occurs (XI, 28), it cannot possibly have originated before the 4th century A.D. From its presentation of the Sāṃkhya system as a Śaṣṭitantra (XII, 18 ff.) Schrader (ZDMG., 68, 1914, 102 ff.; Introduction, pp. 98 f.) concludes that it is earlier than Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. As Īśvarakṛṣṇa himself describes the Sāṃkhya as a Śaṣṭitantra, we might be justified in assuming that the *Ahīrbudhnya-Samhitā* and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* belong to about the same period.

⁶ Cf. the table of contents in Schrader, Introduction, pp. 94 ff.

⁷ On the philosophy of the Pāñcarātras as connected with the theory of the Creation, s. Schrader, *loc. cit.*, pp. 26 ff.

is due to various causes, (1) it is impossible to express the truth about the Absolute in the language of human beings, (2) human beings often take various names to be various objects, (3) human beings vary in intelligence, and (4) the deity has an endless number of forms, of which the philosophers usually comprehend only one or another. In connection with the Creation Chaps. 12 and 13 give a very interesting survey of the 'sciences', *i.e.*, the various systems of religion and philosophy. Then come the rules for the castes and Āśramas. The pater-familias ; and the forest hermit attain to the heaven of Brahman, but the ascetic (*sannyāsin*) 'is extinguished like a lamp' (15, 26 ff.). Chaps. 16-19 deal with the mysterious significance of the letters of the alphabet. Chap. 20 on Dīkṣā begins with a fine description of the ideal Vaiṣṇava teacher : He is not only to know the truth of the Veda and the Vedānta and be ever mindful of the ceremonies due to the gods and the fathers, but also should be "a non-speaker of evil speech, a non-doer of evil deeds, free from envy of the good fortune of others, full of sympathy for the misfortune of others, pitying all creatures, rejoicing at the joy of his neighbour, full of admiration of the good man, forbearing towards the wicked, rich in asceticism, contentment and uprightness, devoted to Yoga and study," and he is to possess not only a detailed knowledge of the Pāñcarātra, the Tantras, Mantras and Yantras, but also the knowledge of the Highest Soul, and must be calm, passionless, having control over his senses, and born of a good family. Chaps. 21-27 then describe diagrams which are also to be used as amulets. Further chapters deal with the cult, the theory and practice of Yoga, 'the hundred and two magic weapons', *i.e.*, secret powers by which might can be attained. A few chapters deal with ceremonies to be performed by a king when in danger during time of war, in order to ensure victory. Sorcery forms the subject-matter of several chapters. An Appendix (*Pariśiṣṭa*) contains a hymn of the thousand names of the divine Sudarśana.

Though the Pāñcarātra-Saṃhitās probably originated in the North, the earliest of them perhaps dating from the 5th-9th century A.D.,¹ it is mainly in the South that they circulated. One of the earlier of these Southern Saṃhitās is the *Īśvara-saṃhitā*, quoted by Rāmānuja's teacher Yāmuna, who died in about 1040 A.D., Rāmānuja himself quotes the *Pauṣkara*,² *Parama* and *Sāttvata-saṃhitās*. On the other

¹ The Viṣṇuīte Upaniṣads of those sects which worship Viṣṇu as Nṛsiṃha or Rāma in Mantras and Yantras, such as the *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya-Upaniṣad* (already commented by Gauḍapāda) and the *Rāmatāpanīya-Upaniṣad*, possibly belonging to the same period. Cf. Farquhar, *Outline*, pp. 188 ff.

² On the *Pauṣkara-Saṃhitā* cf. Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, IV, pp. 864 f.

hand, the *Bṛhadbrahma-saṃhitā*,¹ which is supposed to belong to the *Nārada-Pāñcarātra*, already contains prophecies regarding Rāmānuja, and cannot, therefore, be earlier than the 12th century. The *Jñānāmṛtasāra-saṃhitā*, which is published with the title 'Nārada-Pāñcarātra',² and is entirely devoted to the glorification of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, is quite a modern and apocryphal work. As the cult taught in this book agrees most with that of the Vallabhācārya sect, it appears to have been written a little before Vallabha at the beginning of the 16th century.³

However, when we speak of 'Tantras', we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas, *i.e.*, the worshippers of the Śaktis or 'energies' conceived as female deities, or of the 'Great Śakti', the 'Great Mother', the 'Goddess' (*Devī*), who, in spite of her countless names (*Durgā*, *Kālī*, *Caṇḍā* etc.), is only *one*, the one 'Highest Queen' (*Parameśvarī*). To an even greater degree than is the case with other forms of Hinduism, Śāktism, the religion of the Śāktas, presents a curious medley of the highest and lowest, the sublimest and the basest conceptions ever thought out by the mind of man. In Śāktism and its sacred books, the Tantras, we find the loftiest ideas on the Deity and profound philosophical speculations side by side with the wildest superstition and the most confused occultism ; and side by side with a faultless social code of morality and rigid asceticism, we see a cult disfigured by wild orgies inculcating extremely reprehensible morals. In former years people laid stress only on the worst aspects of this religion or else deemed it best to enshroud this episode in the development of Indian religion in the charitable veil of oblivion.⁴ It is Sir John Woodroffe (under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon) who, by a series of essays and the publication of the most important Tantra texts, has enabled

¹ Published in ĀnSS No. 68.

² Ed. by K. M. Banerjea, *Bibl. Ind.*, 1865. Translated in SBH., Vol. 23, 1921. Cf. A. Roussel, *Etude du Pāñcarātra in Mélanges Charles de Harlez*, Leyde, 1896, pp. 251 ff.

³ See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., pp. 40 f.

⁴ Cf. H. H. Wilson, *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 240-265 ; M. Monier-Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hinduism*, 4th Ed., London, 1891, pp. 180 ff. ; A. Earth, *The Religions of India*, 2nd Ed., London, 1889, pp. 199 ff. ; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., pp. 142 ff.

us to form a just judgment and an objective historical idea of this religion and its literature.¹

A few of the Tantras themselves say that there are 64 Tantras, or 64 Tantras *each*, in three different parts of the world.² However, the number of Tantras existing in manuscripts is far larger.³ Their original home seems to have been Bengal, whence they spread throughout Assam and Nepal, and even beyond India to Tibet and China through the agency of Buddhism. In reality they are known throughout the length and breadth of India, even in Kashmir and the South. As a rule the Tantras take the form of dialogues between Śiva and Pārvatī; when the goddess asks the questions like a pupil and Śiva replies like a teacher, they are called 'Āgamas': when the goddess is the teacher and answers Śiva's questions, they are called 'Nigamas'.

The class of Āgamas includes the very popular and widely known *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*,⁴ in which we see the best aspect of Śāktism. Though it is not an ancient work, it is an example of the superior Tantras, and as such we may accord somewhat more detailed treatment to it, because the same thoughts also occur in the earlier works of this nature, and much has been taken literally from earlier Tantras.

¹ A. Avalon, *Principles of Tantra*, Part I, London, 1914, Part II, 1916; Sir John Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shākta*, 2nd Ed., Madras and London, 1920, and the Introductions to the translation of the *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra* and to the 'Tantrik Texts' edited by him. Cf. also N. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, 1915, pp. 180 ff.; Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, pp. 274 ff., and Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 199 ff., 265 ff.

² Avalon, *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. I, Introduction.

³ Numerous Tantras have been catalogued and described by Haraprasād Śāstrī, *Notices of Sanskrit MSS.*, Second Series I, Calcutta, 1900, pp. xxiv-xxxvii; *Catalogue of Palm-Leaf and Selected Paper MSS.* belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal, Calcutta, 1905, pp. lvii-lxxxii; *Report*, II, 7 ff., 11 f.; M. Rangacharya, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit MSS. in the Government Oriental MSS. Library*, Madras, Vols. XII and XIII. On the Tantras in Malabar s. K. Ramavarma Raja, *JRAS.*, 1910, p. 636. Cf. also Wilson, *Works*, II, 77 ff.; Aufrecht, *Bodl.-Cat.*, I, pp. 88 ff.; Eggeling, *Ind. Off. Cat.*, IV, pp. 844 ff.; Bhandarkar, *Report*, 1883-84, pp. 87 ff.

⁴ "The great work which enjoys a popularity next perhaps to the *Bhagavadgītā*," says Haraprasād, *Notices* I, p. xxxiv. Several editions have appeared in Calcutta, the first being in 1876 by the Ādi Brāhma Samāj. A Prose English Translation by M. N. Dutt, Calcutta, 1900. *Tantra of the Great Liberation* ('*Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*') a Translation from the Sanskrit, with Introduction and Commentary by A. Avalon, London, 1913.

This Tantra speaks of the Brahman, the highest divine principle, in the same expressions as the Upaniṣads. Now according to the doctrines of the Śākta philosophers the Brahman is nothing but the eternal and primeval force (*Śakti*), out of which all things have been created. *Śakti*, 'Energy', is not only feminine as far as grammar is concerned, for all human experience teaches that all life is born from the womb of woman, from the mother. Hence these Indian thinkers believed that the conception of the Highest Deity, the loftiest creative principle, must be made comprehensible to the human mind, not by the word 'Father' but by the word 'Mother'. Just as every human being calls upon his mother in his sorest distress, the great mother of the universe is the sole being who can remove the great misery of existence.¹ All the philosophical conceptions to which language has assigned the feminine gender—first and foremost *prakṛti*, primeval matter, which is identical with *Śakti*—as well as all the mythological figures which popular belief imagined as being female—*Pārvatī*, Siva's consort, also called *Umā*, *Durgā*, *Kālī*, etc., and *Lakṣmī*, Viṣṇu's consort, or *Rādhā*, the beloved of Kṛṣṇa—become divine mothers. In reality all these are but different names for the *one* great universal mother, *Jaganmātā* "the mother of all living creatures". The Indian mind had long been accustomed to recognise the unity of what appears in manifold forms. Just as *one* moon is reflected in innumerable waters, thus *Devī*, 'the Goddess', by whatever other name she may be described, is the embodiment of all the gods and all the 'energies' (*śaktis*) of the gods. In her are Brahman, the Creator, and his *Śakti*, in her are Viṣṇu, the Preserver, and his *Śakti*, in her too, is Śiva as *Mahākāla*, 'the great Father Time', the great Destroyer; as she herself devours the latter, she is also *Ādyā Kalikā*, 'the primeval *Kālī*', and as a 'great sorceress', *Mahāyoginī*, she is at the same time the female Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the world. She is also the mother of *Mahākāla*, who, drunk with wine pressed from the *Madhuka* blossoms, dances before her.² Since the Highest Deity is a woman, every woman is regarded as an incarnation of this Deity. *Devī*, 'the Goddess', is in every female creature. This conception it was which led to a cult of women, which, though in some circles it assumed the form of wild orgies, could, and no doubt did appear also in a purer and ennobled form.

The work seems to have been written in Bengal, because in VI, 7, 3, it recommends three species of fish for the sacrifice, which are found especially in Bengal (s. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, 278 note 4). Farquhar (*An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 354 f.) regards it as quite a modern work, not earlier than the eighteenth century (?). The *Nirvāṇa-Tantra*, in which *Rādhā* is glorified as the wife of Viṣṇu, is an entirely different work, s. Haraprasād, *loc. cit.*

¹ Avalon, *Principles of Tantra*, I, p. 8.

² *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, IV, 29-31; V, 141.

The cult of Devī, the Goddess, who is the joyous creative principle of nature, includes the 'Five Essentials' (*Pañcatattva*) by which man enjoys his existence, preserves his life and obtains issue: Intoxicating drink (*madya*) which is 'the great medicine for humanity, helping it to forget deep sorrows, and is the cause of joy'; meat (*māṃsa*) of the beasts bred in villages, in the air, or forest, which is nourishing, and increases intelligence, energy and strength; fish (*matsya*) which is 'pleasing and of good taste, and increases the generative power of man'; delicacies of parched food (*mudrā*) which is 'easily obtainable, grown in the earth, and is the root of the life of the three worlds'; and fifthly sexual union (*maithuna*)¹ which is "the cause of intense pleasure to all living things, is the origin of all creatures, and the root of the world which is without either beginning or end".² However, these 'five essentials' may only be used in the circle (*cakra*) of the initiated, and even then only after they have been 'purified' by sacred formulas and ceremonies. In these 'circles' of initiated men and women, in which each man has his 'Śakti' on his left hand,³ there are no distinctions of caste, but evil and unbelieving persons cannot be admitted into the 'circle'. Neither is there to be any abuse of the 'five essentials'. He who drinks immoderately, is no true devotee of the Devī. In the lotus feet of the goddess shall take the place of sexual union." If the householder is unable to control his senses, sweet things (milk, sugar, honey) shall be used instead of intoxicating drink, and the worship of the lotus feet of the goddess shall take the place of sexual union.⁴ It is true that the 'hero' (*vīra*), i.e., he who has secret powers and is suited to be a Sādhaka or 'sorcerer' is entitled to unite himself in the 'circle' to a 'Śakti' who is not his wife. He has only to make her his 'wife' by a ceremony prescribed especially for this purpose. It is only in the highest 'heavenly state' (*divyabhāva*), i.e., in the case of the saint who has completely overcome earthly things, that purely symbolical acts take the place of the 'five essentials'.⁵

¹ As all the 'five essentials' begin with an 'm', they are also called 'the five m's'.

² *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, VII, 103 ff. (Avalon's Transl., p. 156). Detailed description of the 'five essentials', VI, 1 ff.

³ Even in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (VIII, 4, 4, 11) we already read that 'the woman's place is on the left', of the man. Hence most probably comes the term *vāmācūra*, 'left-hand ritual', for this kind of 'cult in the circle' (*cakrapūjā*).

⁴ *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, VI, 14 ff. ; 186 ff. VIII, 171 ff., 190 ff.

⁵ The distinction of the three classes of mankind: *paśu*, 'the animal', 'the brutish man', *vīra*, 'the hero' and *divya*, 'the heavenly one', occurs very frequently in all the Tantras. It is not quite clear what *paśu* means; for a *paśu* is not necessarily a stupid or bad man. The term appears to be applicable to a person who is not suited to comprehend occult matters. Cf. Avalon, *Tantra of the Great Liberation*, Introduction, pp. lxx ff.



The cult of the Devī attaches especial importance to Mantras, *i.e.*, prayers and formulas, and Bījas, *i.e.*, syllables of mysterious significance, such as 'aim', 'klim', 'brim', etc. ; as well as Yantras, *i.e.*, diagrams of mysterious significance, drawn on metal, paper or other material, Mudrās, *i.e.*, especial positions of the fingers and movements of the hands, and Nyāsas. The last-named consist of placing the fingertips and the palm of the right hand on the various parts of the body, whilst reciting certain mantras, in order thus to imbue one's body with the life of the Devī.¹ By using all these means, the worshipper causes the deity to show goodwill towards him, he compels the deity into his service, and becomes a *Sādhaka*, a sorcerer : for *Sādhana*, 'sorcery' is one of the principal aims, though not the final goal of the worship of the Devī.

This final goal is that of all Indian sects and systems of religion, namely Mokṣa or salvation, the becoming one with the deity in Mahānirvāṇa, the 'great extinction'. The perfect saint, the Kaula, who sees everything in the Brahman and the Brahman in everything, whether he fulfils the rites laid down in the Tantras or not, attains this state even in this life, and is 'released though living' (*Jivanmukta*).² However, the path of salvation can only be found through the *Tantras* ; for the Veda, the Smṛti, the Purāṇas and the Itihāsas, all these were the sacred books of bygone periods of the world's existence, whereas the Tantras were revealed by Śiva for the welfare of humanity, for our present evil age, the Kali period (I, 20 ff.). In this way the Tantras describe themselves as comparatively modern works. In this age Vedic and other rites and prayers are of no avail, but only the mantras and ceremonies taught in the Tantras are of value (II, 1 ff.). Just as the cult of the Devī leads to the grossest material issues by means of sorcery, as well as to the loftiest ideal of Nirvāṇa, even so the sensual and spiritual elements are well mixed in the cult itself.

There is a meditation on the Devī, which is characteristic of the above. It is taught in the following manner : The devotee first offers Devī spiritual adoration by bestowing the lotus of his heart as her throne, the nectar which trickles from the petals of this lotus-flower as water wherein to wash her feet, his mind as a gift of honour, the restlessness of his senses and his thoughts as a dance, selflessness, passionlessness, etc., as flowers, but afterwards—sacrifices to the Devī an ocean of intoxicating drink, a mountain of meat and fried fishes, a heap of parched dainties in milk with sugar and butter, the nectar of the 'woman flower' (*stripuṣpa*) and the

¹ Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 275, compares the Nyāsa with the Christian sign of the Cross, and points out further analogies between the Tantric and the Christian ritual.

² *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, X, 209 ff. Kaula or Kaulika is "one who belongs to the family (*kula*) of the goddess Kālī". Cf. Haraprasāda Śāstrī, *Notices of Sanskrit MSS.*,

water which has been used for washing the Śakti.¹ Besides the 'five essentials' Kālī, thou who dwellest in the inmost soul of all, who art the inmost cation of the senses, from which even bells, incense, flowers, candles and rosaries are not missing, there is also calm meditation on the deity (*dhyāna*). In like manner, beside mantras which are devoid of all meaning and insipid, we find such beautiful lines as for instance V, 156 : "O Ādya Kālī, thou who dwellest in the inmost soul of all, who art the inmost light O Mother ! Accept this the prayer of my heart, I bow down before thee."

Along with the Tantric ritual, the *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra* also teaches a philosophy which is little different from the orthodox systems of the Vedānta and Sāṃkhya,² and which is at times recognisable even in that chaos of nonsensical incantations. As regards the ethics, the doctrine of the duties in Chapter VIII of the *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra* reminds us at every turn of Manu's Law-book, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the Buddhist sermons. Though there are no caste distinctions in the actual Śākta ritual, all castes and sexes being accounted equal, the castes are nevertheless recognised in agreement with Brahmanism, except that in addition to the usual four castes a fifth one is added, namely that of the Sāmānyas, which arose through the mingling of the four older castes. Whilst Manu has four Āśramas or stages of life, our Tantra teaches that in the Kali epoch there are only two, Āśramas, the state of the householder and that of the ascetic. For the rest, all which is taught here about duties to one's parents, to wife and child, to relatives and to one's fellow men in general, might be found exactly the same in any other religious book or even in a secular manual of morality. We quote only a few verses from this Chapter VIII by way of example :

I, pp. xxvi, xxxiii. For a different interpretation s. Avalon, *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. IV, Introduction, where *Kaula* is derived from *Kula* in the sense of 'community' or 'combination of soul, knowledge and universe'. The Tantras speak of the Kaula sometimes as the loftiest sage and sometimes as a person to whom all is permitted as regards the 'five essentials'. The last verse of Chap. X of the *Jñānatānta* teaches that only Brahmins of the fourth Āśrama may fulfil 'the left-hand cult', whilst householders may perform only the 'right-hand cult'. (Haraprasāda Śāstrī, *loc. cit.*, pp. xxxi, 126).

¹ *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, V, 139-151.

² On the philosophy of the Tantras s. S. Das Gupta in *Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee*, Vol. III, 1, 1922, pp. 263 ff.

A householder should be devoted to the contemplation of Brahman and possessed of the knowledge of Brahman, and should consign whatever he does to Brahman. (23)

He should not tell an untruth, or practise deceit, and should ever be engaged in the worship of the Devatās and guests. (24)

Regarding his father and mother as two visible incarnate deities, he should ever and by every means in his power serve them. (25)

Even if the vital breath were to reach his throat,¹ the householder should not eat without first feeding his mother, father, son, wife, guest and brother. (33)

The householder should never punish his wife, but should cherish her like a mother. If she is virtuous and devoted to her husband, he should never forsake her even in times of greatest misfortune. (39)

A father should fondle and nurture his sons until their fourth year, and then until their sixteenth they should be taught learning and their duties. (45) Up to their twentieth year they should be kept engaged in household duties, and thenceforward, considering them as equals, he should ever show affection towards them. (46) In the same manner a daughter should be cherished and educated with great care, and then given away with money and jewels to a wise husband. (47)

The man who has dedicated tanks, planted trees, built rest-houses on the roadside, or bridges, has conquered the three worlds. (63) That man who is the happiness of his mother and father, to whom his friends are devoted, and whose fame is sung by men, is the conqueror of the three worlds. (64) By him whose aim is truth, whose charity is ever for the poor, who has mastered lust and anger, are the three worlds conquered. (65).²

The duties of the separate castes as well as the duties of the king, as prescribed here, do not greatly differ from those laid down by Manu. The value of family life is put very high. Thus there is a strict injunction that no man who has children, wives or other near relatives to support, shall devote himself to the ascetic life.³ In complete agreement with the regulations in the brahmanical texts, Chapter IX describes the 'sacraments' (*saṃskāras*) from conception till marriage, and Chapter X similarly gives instructions for the burial of the dead and the cult of the departed (*śrāddhas*). A peculiarity of the Śāktas as regards marriage is that, in addition to the *Brāhma*-marriage, for which the brahmanical rules provide, there is also a *Śaiva*-marriage, *i.e.*, a kind of marriage for a certain time, which is only permitted to members of the circle (*cakra*) of

¹ *I.e.*, even if he were about to die of hunger.

² Translated by Avalon, pp. 161 f., 163, 165 f.

³ In the *Kauṭilya-Arthaśāstra*, II, 1, 19 (p. 48) a fine is prescribed for him who becomes an ascetic without first having provided for his wife and children.

the initiated.¹ However, the children of such marriages are not legitimate and cannot inherit. This shows to how great an extent brahmanical law is valid for the Śāktas too. Thus also the section on civil and criminal law in Chapters XI and XII agrees in essentials with Manu.

Nevertheless the Kauladharmā which is recited in the Tantra, is declared in extravagant terms to be the best of all religions, and the adoration of the Kula saint is praised as supremely meritorious. In words similar to those of a famous Buddhist text we read in our Tantra : "As the footmarks of all animals disappear, in the footmark of the elephant, so do all other Dharmas disappear in the Kula-Dharma."²

One of the principal works of the Kaulas, *i.e.*, the most advanced of the Śāktas, is the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*,³ which teaches that there are six forms of life (*ācāra*),⁴ which are but an introduction to the Kulācāra, and that release from suffering, and the highest salvation can only be attained through the Kulācāra or Kula-Dharma.

When the Devī asks : "Whereby is release from suffering to be attained ?" Śiva replies : "Only through the knowledge of the Unity ; for the creatures, surrounded by Māyā, are but as sparks emanating from the fire of Brahman. There are people who boast of their knowledge of Brahman, smear their bodies with ashes, and practise asceticism, but are yet only devoted to the pleasures of their senses". "Asses and other animals, go about naked without shame, whether they dwell in the house or in the forest : does this make them Yogins ?" (I, 79). In order to become a Kaula a man should avoid all external things and strive only for true knowledge. Ritual and asceticism are of value only as long as a man has not yet recognised the truth. The Kula-Dharma is *Yoga* (meditation) as well as *Bhoga* (enjoyment), but only for the man who has purified his mind and has control over his senses. We can well understand the statement, so often repeated in the Tantras, that it is easier to ride on a drawn sword than to be a true Kaula, when in one and the same book we find, not only doctrines on the true knowledge of the Brahman and Yoga, but also the minutest details concerning the preparation of twelve kinds of intoxicating drinks and everything connected with the 'five essentials',

¹ See above p. 521.

² *Mahānirvāṇa-Tantra*, XIV, 180, transl. Avalon, p. 356. Cf. *Majjhimanikāya*, 28 (at the beginning).

³ Ed. by Tārānāth Vidyāratna in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. V, 1917.

⁴ These are *Vedācāra*, *Vaiṣṇavācāra*, *Śaivācāra*, *Dakṣiṇācāra*, *Bāmācāra*, *Siddhāntācāra* (or *Yogācāra*), Cf. Avalon, *Tantra of the Great Liberation*, Introduction, pp. lxxviii ff.

which bestow *bhukti* (enjoyment) and *mukti* (salvation) at the same time.¹ "The Brahmin," we read, "should drink at all times, the warrior at the beginning of the battle, the Vaiśya when purchasing cows, the Śūdra when performing the funeral sacrifices" (V, 84). On the other hand, when these and similar rules have been formulated, we again read that true drinking is the union of Kuṇḍalinī Śakti with Ciccandra ('moon of thought'), others being merely imbibers of intoxicants, that the true 'flesh-eater' is he who merges his thought in the highest Being, and a true 'fish-eater' is he who curbs his senses and unites them with the Ātman—'others merely kill animals'; and that true *maithuna* is the union of the highest Śakti or Kuṇḍalinī with the Ātman—'others are merely slaves to women'. This comes at the close of Chapter V. In Chapter VII, however, the necessity of drink in the cult of Śakti is again emphasized. It is true that one should only drink in moderation, but this moderation is reckoned very liberally: "As long as the eye, the understanding, speech and the body do not become unsteady, a man may continue drinking, but drink taken in excess of this is the drinking of a brute beast" (VII, 97). Though it is true that only the initiated are allowed to drink, it is to them that the oft-quoted maxim is addressed: "He is to drink, drink and drink again, till he falls to the ground, and when he has arisen, he is to drink yet again—then there will be no rebirth" (VII, 100).²

Another oft-quoted work of the Kaula School of the Śaktas is the 'Head jewel of the Kula', *Kulacūḍāmaṇi*,³ an example of a Nigama in which Devī proclaims the doctrine and Śiva listens in the character of a pupil. In reality Śiva and Devī are one, and the latter says at the end of the book:

"Thou appearest now as the father, now in the form of the teacher, then thou becomest the son, then again a pupil . . . Everything whatever exists in the world, consists of Śiva and Śakti. Thou, O God of gods, art all, and I, too, am all to all eternity. Thou art the teacher when I

¹ Though the *surā* drink is extolled in the most extravagant fashion (V, 38 f.), the others are also recommended (V, 30). The eating of meat at the *Kulapñjā* is a permissible exception to the rule of non-killing (*ahiṃsā*).

² The saying occurs frequently in the Tantras. According to Avalon these and similar verses do not refer to actual drinking, but to the symbolical 'drinking' of the Yoga. This, however, is difficult to believe.

³ Ed. by Girīsha Chandra Vedāntatīrtha, with an Introduction by A. K. Maitra in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. IV, 1915. The ritual of the Kaulas is also treated in the *Nityāṣoḍaśī-Tantra*, which is a part of the *Vāmakeśvara-Tantra* (publ. in *ĀnSS.*, Vol. 56, 1908) and the *Adīśvaracaritra*, an analysis of which is given by L. Suali (*SIFI.*, Vol. 7).

am the pupil, but then there shall be no distinction. Therefore be thou the teacher, O Lord, and I shall be thy Pupil, O Highest Lord !”

The work begins with an enumeration of the Kulasundarīs or Devīs, and then describes the worship of the Śaktis with Yantras as well as meditations on the unity of the Great Mother. Instructions are given for the worship not only of one's own wife but also for that of an outside 'Śakti'. He who would be admitted to the Cakra rites, must first have walked in the path of the love of God (*bhaktimārga*) according to Vaiṣṇavism, and he must be good and patient to others. The last three chapters deal solely with magic.

One of the more important texts of the Tantras is the *Prapañcasāra-Tantra*,¹ which is ascribed to the philosopher Śaṅkara or the god Śiva in his incarnation as Śaṅkara. Though the name Śaṅkara appears not infrequently in the Tantra literature, it is by no means certain that the texts attributed to him were really his work. *Prapañca* means 'the expansion', 'the expanded universe', hence *Prapañcasāra*, 'the Essence of the Universe'.

The work begins with an account of the Creation.² This is followed by treatises on chronology, embryology, anatomy, physiology and psychology, which are no more 'scientific' than the succeeding chapters on the occult doctrines of Kuṇḍalinī and the secret significance of the Sanskrit alphabet and the Bījas. According to the general teaching of the Tantras the human organism is a microcosm, a miniature copy of the universe, and contains countless canals (*nāḍī*) through which some secret power flows through the body. Connected with these canals there are six great centres (*cakra*) lying one above the other, which are also furnished with occult powers. The lowest and most important of these centres contains the Brahman in the form of a Liṅga, and coiled round this Liṅga, like a serpent, lies the Śakti called Kuṇḍalinī.³ This Kuṇḍalinī is forced up into the highest centre by Sādhana and Yoga, and then salvation is attained.

¹ Ed. by Tārānātha Vidyāratna in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. III, 1914. The author Śaṅkara is supposed to be identical with the commentator of the *Nṛsiṃhapūrvaṭāpanīya-Upaniṣad*. Cf. Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, *Ind. Hist. Quarterly*, I, 1925, p. 120.

² On the Creation theories of the Tantras s. J. G. Woodroffe, *Creation as explained in the Tantra* (read at the Silver Jubilee of the Chaitanya Library, Calcutta, 1915).

³ Kuṇḍalinī, 'the coiled one'. The theory of the *Nāḍīs* and *Cakras* is also to be found in the *Varāha-Upaniṣad*, V, 22 ff. and in the *Saṅḍilya-Upaniṣad* (*Yoga Upaniṣad* ed., Mahadeva Sastri, pp. 505 f., 518 ff.).

The Bijas and Mantras,¹ that is, the letters and syllables and the formulas composed from them, in all of which, according to an ancient doctrine already foreshadowed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads,² a potent influence on the human organism and the universe lies concealed, are means to the attainment of the highest perfections (*siddhi*).

The chapters on the ritual for the consecration (*dīkṣā*), the worship of the mothers and the meditations on the Devī are of considerable significance from the point of view of the history of religion. The very prominent part played in the whole of this cult by the erotic element is exemplified in IX, 23 ff., where it is described how the wives of the gods, demons and demigods, compelled by Mantras, come to the sorcerer "scattering their ornaments in the intoxication of love, letting their silken draperies slip down, enveloping their forms in the net of their flying tresses, their every limb quivering with intolerable torments of love, the drops of sweat falling like pearls over their thighs, bosom and armpits torn by the arrows of the love god, their bodies immersed in the ocean of the passion of love, their lips tossed by the tempest of their deep-drawn breath" etc. Chapter XVIII teaches the Mantras and Dhyānas (*meditations*) for the worship of the love god and his Śaktis, and the union of man and woman is presented as a mystical union of the ego (*ahaṃkāra*) with knowledge (*Buddhi*) and as a holy act of sacrifice. If the man honours his beloved wife in this manner, then, wounded by the arrows of the love god, she will follow him as a shadow even into the other world (XVIII, 33). Chapter XXVIII is dedicated to Ardhanārīśvara, the god who is half female—the right half of his body is in the form of Śiva who is represented as a wild-looking man, and the left half is his Śakti, represented as a voluptuous woman. Chapter XXXIII, with which the work originally seems to have closed, devotes its first part to a description of ceremonies to prevent childlessness, which is the result of carelessness in the worship of the gods and of scorning the wife. The second part deals with the relationship between teacher and pupil, which is of paramount importance in the Śakti religion.

The ritual and the Mantras described in this Tantra are not limited to the worship of the various forms of Devī and Śiva, but frequently also Viṣṇu and his avatāras are referred to. Chapter XXXVI contains

¹ The monosyllabic meaningless sounds such as *hrīm*, *śrīm*, *krīm*, *phat*, etc. are *Bija*, 'seeds', because they are the seed from which the fruit of magic powers (*siddhi*) is produced, and because they are the 'seed' of the Mantras. Cf. Avalon, *The Tantra of the Great Liberation*, Introd. pp. lxxxiii ff.

² There is considerable truth in the contention of B. L. Mukherji (in Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shāktas*, pp. 441 f.) that the occultism of the Tantras is already foreshadowed in the Brāhmaṇas, and that allusions to sexual intercourse play a prominent part in the symbolism of the Brāhmaṇas as well as in the Tantras.

a reflection on Viṣṇu Trailokyamohana ('the confounder of the triple world'). This description is replete with sensual fire : Viṣṇu shines like millions of suns and is of supreme beauty. Full of kindness his glance rests upon Śrī, his consort, who embraces him lovingly. She, too, is incomparably beautiful. All the gods and demons and their wives do honour to the lofty, divine couple ; but the divine women press around Viṣṇu full of the fiery longing of love, and exclaim : 'Be our consort, our refuge, O highest Lord !'¹

The first part² of the *Tantrarāja-Tantra* bearing the proud title 'king of Tantras' treats of the Śrīyantra, the 'famous diagram', which consists of nine triangles and nine circles cleverly drawn one within the other and each one of which has a special mystical significance. By meditation with the aid of this Śrīyantra one attains knowledge of the Unity, *i.e.*, the knowledge that everything in the world is one with the Devī. The *Kālivilāsa-Tantra*,³ which belongs to the 'prohibited' Tantras, *i.e.*, those which are valid not for our age but only for a bygone period, is a later text. The attitude adopted towards the Pañcatattva ritual is very ambiguous indeed. All that we can glean clearly from the text is that there were two different schools of Śāktas, one of which condemned this ritual, while the other considered it as compulsory. A few chapters deal with Kṛṣṇa as the lover of Rādhā, who is identical with the goddess Kālī. The *Jñānārṇava-Tantra*⁴ deals with the various kinds of Tantra ritual and the meditations on the various forms of Devī. The Kumārī-pūjana, the worship of young maidens, is described as the highest sacrifice. The *Śāradātilaka-Tantra*,⁵ written by Lakṣmaṇa Deśika in the 11th century, begins with a theory of the Creation and the origin of human speech, but treats chiefly of Mantras, Yantras, and magic.

¹ XXXVI, 35-47, translated by Avalon in the Introduction, pp. 61 ff.

² This one alone (Part I, Chapters I-XVIII) has been published by M. Lakṣmaṇa Shāstrī in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. VIII, 1918.

³ Ed. by Pārvatī Charaṇa Tarkatīrtha in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. VI, 1917. One chapter contains a Mantra in a dialect which is a mixture of Assamese and East Bengali, another contains Mantras with the words written backwards.

⁴ Published in ĀṇṢS No. 69, 1912.

⁵ An analysis of its contents by A. H. Ewing, *JAOS.*, 23, 1902, pp. 65 ff. Cf. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 207.

In addition to the actual 'revealed' Tantras there are innumerable manuals on separate branches of Tantric ritual¹ and great collections compiled from the various Tantras.²

The earliest Nepalese manuscripts of Tantras date from the seventh to the ninth century,³ and it is not very likely that this literature originated further back than the fifth or sixth century. Even in the latest portions of the *Mahābhārata*, with their frequent allusions to Itihāsas and Purāṇas, there is never mention of Tantras, and the Amarakośa, among the meanings of the word '*tantra*' does not give that of a religious book.⁴ Neither do the Chinese pilgrims as yet mention the Tantras. In the seventh and eighth centuries they began to penetrate into Buddhism, and in the second half of the eighth century Buddhist Tantras were translated into Chinese⁵ and in the ninth century into Tibetan also.

¹ Thus there are glossaries and dictionaries to explain the mysterious significance of the letters, *Bijas* and *Mantras*, as well as the *Mudrās* or positions of the fingers to be observed with the Yoga. A few of these texts (*Mantrābhidhāna* from the Rudrayāmala, *Ekākṣarakośa* by Puruṣottamadeva, *Bijānighaṇṭu* by Bhairava, *Mātrkānighaṇṭu* by Mahīdhara and by Mādhava, *Mudrānighaṇṭu* from the *Vāmakeśvara-Tantra*) are published by A. Avalon, *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. I, 1913. Cf. also Th. Zachariæ, *Die indischen Wörterbücher* ('Grundriss' I, 3 B, 1897) par. 27, and Leumann, OC., VI, Leyden, Vol. III, pp. 589 ff. The six centres (*cakra*) and the Kuṇḍalinī are treated in the *Saṭcakranirūpaṇa* from the *Śrītattvacintāmaṇi* by Pūrṇānanda Svāmī and the *Pādukāpañcaka*, both published by Tārānātha Vidyāratna in *Tantrik Texts*, Vol. II, 1913 and translated into English by A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, 2nd ed., Madras 1924.

² Thus the *Tantrasamuccaya*, very popular in Malabar, written by Nārāyaṇa of the Jayanta-mangala family of N. Travancore about 1426 A.D., published by T. Gaṇapati Sāstrī in TSS Nos. 67 and 71.

³ A *Kubjikāmata-Tantra* is said to date from the 7th century, and a *Niśvāsatattva-Saṃhitā* from the 8th century. A *Parameśvaramata-Tantra* was written in 858 A.D. Cf. Haraprasād, *Report I*, p. 4.

⁴ *Amarakośa*, III, 182 gives for *tantra* the meaning *siddhānta*, which is really 'a system of doctrines' in general, and not a particular class of texts. Cf. Wilson, *Works*, I, 250. The other Kośas, too, give all kinds of meanings for *tantra*, but not that of the sacred book of a sect. When *mantra* and *tantra* are mentioned side by side (*Ahīrbudhnyā-Saṃhitā* XX, 5; *Pañcatantra*, text. simpl., ed. F. Kielhorn, I, v. 70; *Daśakumāracarita*, II, NSP edition, p. 81; *mudrātantramāntra-dhyānādibhīḥ*), *tantra* means 'magic rite', and *mantra* 'incantation'. The passage in the *Daśakumāracarita*, probably presupposes a knowledge of Tantras. Daṇḍin, however, did not live earlier than the 7th century A.D. The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (IV, 24, 62; XI, 3, 47 f., 5, 28; 31) is the first work to mention the Tantras as a class of work apart from the Veda.

⁵ According to L. Wieger, *Histoire des croyances religieuses et des opinions philosophiques en Chine*, Paris, 1917 (quoted by Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shākta*, pp. 119 ff.), as early as in the 7th century. It is not likely that the *nigamas* mentioned side by side with the *nirghaṇṭu* in *Lalitavistara*, XII (ed. Lefmann, p. 153) are identical with the Tantras known as 'nigama', as is the view of Avalon (*Principles of Tantra*, I, p. xli). As in *Mānu*, IV, 14; IX, 14, texts of Veda-exegesis are no doubt meant.

The fact that the worship of Durgā, which plays so great a part in the Tantras, harks back to the later Vedic period,¹ does not prove that Tantrism and the Tantras are of an equally venerable age. There is no doubt that this goddess and her cult do unite traits of very different deities, Aryan as well as non-Aryan. It is probable, too, that the system of the Tantras adopted many characteristics from non-Aryan and non-brahmanical cults.² On the other hand, some essential traits of the Tantras can be found as far back as in the Atharvaveda, as well as in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. Śāktism was prevalent from the twelfth to the sixteenth century in Bengal especially among the aristocracy, and even at the present day its adherents are to be found not in the lower castes, but among the educated.³ On the whole the Tantras and the curious excrescences and degenerations of religion described in them, are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are the pseudo-scientific productions of theologians, in which the practice and theory of Yoga and doctrines of the monist (*advaita*) philosophy are seen mingled with the most extravagant symbolism and occultism.

Neither the Purāṇas nor the Tantras make enjoyable reading, and this is much more applicable to the latter. They are the work of inferior writers, and are often written in barbarous and ungrammatical Sanskrit. On the other hand, neither the literary historian nor the student of religion can afford to pass them by in silence; for during centuries and even at the present time these writings are the spiritual food of millions of Indians. 'The Purāṇas', says a learned Hindu,⁴ 'form an important portion of the

¹ Jacobi in ERE., V, 117 ff.

² In the *Jayadrathayāmala* it is said that Parameśvarī is to be worshipped in the house of a potter or oil-presser (who belong to the lowest castes). Cf. Haraprasād, *Report*, I, p. 16; *Catalogue of the Durbar Library*, Nepal, p. lxi.

³ The present-day Śāktas are probably for the most part such as will have none of the Pañcatattva ritual. At any rate I was assured in Kashmir that the Śāktas there all abhor rites of this nature.

⁴ N. Mukhopādhyāya in the Introduction to his edition of the *Karma-Purāṇa* ('Bibl. Ind.'), p. xv.



religious literature of the Hindus, and, together with the Dharmaśāstras and Tantras, govern their conduct and regulate their religious observances at the present day. The Vedas are studied by the antiquarian, the Upaniṣads by the philosopher ; but every orthodox Hindu must have some knowledge of the Purāṇas, directly or vicariously, to shape his conduct and to perform the duties essential to his worldly and spiritual welfare.' Whatever also may be our opinion of the literary, religious and moral value of the Tantras, the historian of Indian religion and culture cannot afford to neglect them, and from the point of view of comparative religion, too, they contain valuable material.

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